CHESTER

BY

FRANCIS R. G. DUCKWORTH

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

E. HARRISON COMPTON

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THE CATHEDRAL AND ST. WERBURGH'S STREET

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CHESTER

BY

FRANCIS R. G. DUCKWORTH

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

E. HARRISON COMPTON

SECOND EDITION

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PREFACE

I HAVE not attempted a guide-book to Chester, nor yet a history. There is no lack of either. My object has been not so much to track out cause and effect as to catch and fix the atmosphere of Chester in certain periods of its history. For colour for the picture, I have occasionally had to go outside the city, to borrow from other places or from alien thinkers and writers.

An important duty which I must here discharge is to thank those who have afforded me their help. Professor Haverfield, Professor Bridge, the Venerable Archdeacon Barber, and Mr. Henry Taylor, have each revised the proofs of various chapters and made valuable suggestions. Almost my chiefest debt is to Canon Morris's admirable work, "Chester during the Plantagenet and Tudor Periods," a book which has not yet come by its own, though there is a fairer prospect that it will win appreciation now

that the interest in local history is developing so rapidly. I have obtained much valuable material from the records of the "Chester Archæological and Historic Society," and am under obligation to Dr. B. C. A. Windle's "Chester" in the "Old English Towns" series.

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CHESTER

A

SKETCH-MAP OF CHESTER

Within the Walls

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I

ROMANCE

"I'll tell you, there is good men born at Monmouth . . ."

The legendary lore of Chester is neither vast nor widely known, but it is significant. One story, indeed, is (or used to be—for they teach history differently now) familiar to every school-child: the story of how King Edgar was rowed up the Dee by six vassal kings of England and Scotland. Of others, more will be said in what follows, since legends are the most direct and candid expression of character in race or tribe or city. For the moment it must be enough to affirm that the common element in all these stories amounts to a high romantic feeling and a vivid sense of contrast. But, it will be objected, these are also common features of most legends, and particularly of all British legends. There is, nevertheless, inherent in the romances of Chester a peculiar element which it will indeed be the business of all succeeding chapters to elaborate, but which may be conveniently illustrated here by reference to something which is not tradition, but actual fact.

When I was a boy I made the acquaintance of an old therapeutic electrician who lived in Watergate Row. It is significant that he did not live on the showy side of the street, the south side, but on the north, where no tourists ever walk; this proves that whatever he did was genuine, sprang from deep in his heart, was not a piece of self-advertisement capable of being translated into terms of pounds, shillings and pence. He was a little man, lean and hairy, with a white beard and black eyebrows, and he sold me bits of sheet-copper and porous cells for Daniell batteries, and I never suspected the greatness of his soul till I read of his death not long ago. And then my eyes were opened. For I read that for a number of years he had devoted all his leisure time (which must have been considerable, seeing that there is no great demand for therapeutic electricians in Chester) to making his coffin; and he had made it entirely of old matchboxes — some thousands were employed. Of, course the shallow-pates called him mad or a faddist. To me it seems that the spirit of this ancient city burned strong within him; it was the spirit of men who lived elbow to elbow with death, and who without ostentation accepted that comradeship—in fact, made it in some sort the basis of their lives, without at the same time coming under any suspicion of morbidness. They did not cease their activities, but in spite of the nearness of death they performed graceful and beautiful deeds; they embroidered death, dressed him up in shining or fantastical garb according to their own quiet spirit of adventure. The

WATERGATE ROW SOUTH SIDE

old electrician was not a faddist, but a romantic after that peculiar type of romance which is the spirit of this city.

For of this type, cosiness or homeliness is an essential. This interfusing of cosiness and romance is appreciated in certain parts of "Robinson Crusoe"; not in the risk or the novelty of the incidents, but in a certain contrast between the snugness inside Robinson Crusoe's "house" and the danger and perils without. In mediæval Chester you get that contrast complete: outside the ring-wall a wilderness whence at any unexpected hour bands of semi-savage Welshmen may leap like wild cats at your wall, ready to stab and fire. Even more awful spiritual enemies haunt the tangled, primeval forest and the dark reaches of the Dee; but within, under the beneficent shadows of the Abbey, flourishes a quiet, self-sufficient civic life to which the thrilling sense of perils outside just adds a touch of luxury, an extra cosiness.

The Romans, on the other hand, being unromantic, made of Chester a fortress, nothing more. They understood the strategical value of the situation, and the dangerous opposition of the various native tribes; therefore here they built a fortress. But they had no eye for the possibility of romantic contrast; therefore they made no home here in the shadow of death. It is all as if one man should make a sword and stop short there, whilst another would carve the pommel into the likeness of a child's head, and engrave all down the blade a sonnet in praise of married life. It is as if one man should build a coffin of plain unvarnished deal,

whilst another might build his of matchboxes, all gaudily coloured with appeals to "Encourage Home Industries."

In any remarkable architectural characteristic, or in any peculiar disposition of the streets not solely due to physical causes, the influence of the social self will be manifested. Consider our Rows in Chester, for instance. They are a kind of raised auditorium, whence the people can witness all pageants and shows, can see and be seen themselves. They are galleries meant to be garnished with human countenances.

When warlike schemes were in the air, or when the Mystery Plays were to be proclaimed or enacted, or when one came preaching Crusade to the Holy Land, always the Rows were seen crowded with humanity. Here are the petty individual emotions, the myriad atoms, as yet separate. One man, being a leader of men, warrior, priest, or singer, has within him the sole electric spark that with miraculous power can work a fusion of those elements into a new force of immeasurable potency. The builders of the Rows, the actual men of flesh and blood, who laboured with axe and hammer and trowel, cannot have been conscious that they were subserving any such mighty purpose. Their professed end was not political or social. Neither, on the other hand, was it æsthetic, but utilitarian. None the less, they were blind agents of some mind more than human, which, in despite of man's efforts, disposed his ends, like a parent, with tender humour beguiling wilful and selfish children into the achievement of good. The Rows are picturesque and romantic in the cosy Chester way, offering as they do a

contrast between gloomy dripping skies and life pulsing full and warm in these galleries.

I do not see that any man, even when he recalls the town halls of mediæval Flanders, need speak apologetically of the Chester Pentice. No device of man could have presented in more significant language the distinctive character of the city's municipal existence, and its disappearance should be mourned as one of the chief losses sustained by the city—far above the loss of the mediæval gates, or such half-timbered mansions as Mainwaring House.

The High Cross is the evident focus of the city; all the main streets converge upon it. This, of course, is due to the magnificent accident that the town stands on the site of a Roman camp. The Romans arranged matters so that the general's headquarters (the prætorium) should be at the place of intersection of the main thoroughfares which joined up the four gates of the camp. On the site of the prætorium a church was built —St. Peter's—long before there was any need of a Town Hall, before the town had attained full organic municipal life. When the need came, only one thing was possible—they had to build a penthouse (Pentice) leaning right up against the wall of St. Peter's. A very crude drawing by Randle Holme is the only source from which to obtain an idea of its appearance. It was a time-stained, half-timbered structure, with the usual wide windows and a gallery on the top, from which the Mayor could address his fellow-citizens. I copy here an extract from King's "Vale Royal," given in Canon

Morris's book, "Chester during the Plantagenet and Tudor Periods": "The mayor remaineth most part of the day at a place called the Pendice, which is a brave place builded for the purpose at the high cross under St. Peter's Church, and in the middest of the city, in such sort that a man may stand therein and see into the markets or four principal streets of the city." It is difficult to understand how the Mayor could command a view of Northgate Street as well as of the other three. Nothing more snug and neat than this arrangement could be imagined ; let it be noticed, moreover, that in such a position a stone or brick building would have been hideous, while a half-timbered one—in the style which is the peculiar glory of this countryside—might be both dignified and picturesque.

There was a special fitness in the position of the Town Hall coinciding with that of the prætorium. Not only was the element of snugness in this situation, but also that of romantic adventurousness. For the municipality was originally a fighting concern. Towns had to carry on real campaigns to wrest their independence from local aristocrats ; there was rarely actual bloodshed, but all the other elements of warfare, especially discipline and solidarity, were present. In the municipal army, each citizen had his definite position and duties, and could rise through a series of offices to chief command. He was bound to merge his individuality, to sacrifice personal convenience, for the good of the community. Office, too, was apt to be extremely arduous, dangerous and expensive, and it was necessary in many cases to

threaten burgesses with fines if they refused to accept it —otherwise all would certainly have refused. But this is no place for entering upon detail. Enough to remember that no man could pass up the main streets on his way to business without having in the centre of his view a reminder of his civic obligations and responsibilities, without realizing that to be a citizen meant something more than to exist in a place full of houses. It is surely no mere whimsy to refer back to such influences as these the peculiar solidarity and loyalty that have distinguished the history of the place.

I can conceive a stranger who should have read thus far being disappointed, upon actually visiting the city, with its general physical surroundings. The romantic city, he might say, ought not to stand in a wide open plain, half enfolded in the slow sweep of a navigable river— "I expect a rocky, turret-crowned eminence—a scene distantly resembling the Xanadu of Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan,' with deep, gloomy chasms and foaming torrents. But here the highest eminence I can find is the low knoll from which the castle looks out over the salmon-boats." The best way to reply to that objection might be to present the following picture.

You are standing on a hillside overlooking a wide valley, not portioned out into plough and pasture, nor dotted about with farmsteads, but shrouded with dense forests, sodden green under the grey veils of the sky. To the eastward, twelve miles away, you can hardly descry the further bulwark of the valley, a ridge ending in an abrupt headland. Between this and that, a dark

square tower rises above the vague outlines of a city's roofs. It seems to keep an unremitting watch upon you and upon the higher, wilder hills behind you. From its attitude, though at this distance no details are visible, some suggestion of control disengages itself not unmixed with menace. Westward from the city a river sprawls across its sandy estuary, and small craft thread their way to and from the open sea, which lies far away to your left. As you watch, the last of the sunlight, spurting fiercely through rents in the cloud-curtain, strikes the sails yonder rosy red, and bathes in blood the city walls and the tower behind.

So might Chester have appeared in the Middle Ages to anyone viewing it from Hawarden Ridge. Were the spectator not a man, but the *genius loci*, a disembodied, timeless spirit, he might, contemplating hence that vigilant city, have witnessed the building up, warp and woof, of our history, as before his eyes armies like flying shuttles threaded across and across the wide levels of the valley—the legions of Suetonius, the indomitable, pitiless war-machine of Rome ; the wild onrush of Saxons ; the black pirate-craft of the Danes ; the Normans in mid-winter ; then the dust of the Welsh coast-roads stirred by levy after levy of Norman and Plantagenet Kings through more than two hundred years ; and all the while, from this gateway of Celtic lands, sail after sail moving seaward with armies for the Irish wars. Last would come the troops of King and Parliament ; then—silence.

And if this should not convince my downcast friend

that the situation of Chester has some germs of romantic possibilities in it, I should have one argument at least left, and if this, too, failed, I should think him undeserving to be converted. For, begging his pardon, Chester *is* in a sense "precipice-encurled." Let him only trouble to take his stand on the North Wall between the Northgate and the Phœnix Tower, and consider the depth below him of the canal tow-path. I picture him with a weary smile turning away—if only it had not been a canal, of all unromantic things! True, this is not Alph, the sacred river, that ran through caverns measureless to man, but at least it suggests a pretty riddle—"When is a canal not a canal?" The answer is: "When it is a Roman fossa." For what we are looking at now is none other than the great ditch which those magnificent engineers clave out of the solid sandstone to protect their camp upon its northern side. But let us alter our point of view. The thing is much more effective seen from below. Descend from the walls near the Water Tower and walk along the canal tow-path, and you will find yourself in the depths of an Alpine ravine. And if still the name "canal" is an obstacle, this will be sheer unreasonableness. There are canals in Venice, yet who dares call Venice unromantic? Think of the Bridge of Sighs—think, and then let me quietly score by remarking that we, too, in Chester have our Bridge of Sighs, and point to it overhead—by far more grim and horror-striking than the rococo structure of Venice. *Our* Bridge of Sighs might have been designed by Dante, carried so high overhead, a

mere thread of a thing, a gossamer slung across this dark, dank cleft. Prisoners condemned to be hung passed across this from Northgate Gaol to St. John's Chapel in the old "hospital" founded by Randle Blundeville. The solid and respectable Blue-Coat School which has replaced the hospital certainly detracts a little from the horror of the scene, but you cannot deny in it a real romantic suggestiveness.

An immense spiritual fatigue was probably the central characteristic of the last generation. Men looked back, and saw such vast energies liberated in the name of noble ends, and all the result seemed to have been a worse ravelling of the social plexus, a thornier doubt woven in with man's ideas of God and Death. The typical thinker found himself helpless and dismayed before the spectacle of life, with its gaps where there should be music and light, its sudden avenues promising escape, only to close in a flash, its drab skies and squalid ways. He did not protest; he did not brace himself to remould the scheme of things: consuming zeal and faith at white-heat died with Ruskin. Our prophets saw visions, but there was no message. One found them on a hilltop in a windless evening, dimly conscious of vast serene joys in all about them, and waiting, tense, for the moment of illumination, the caress of the Infinite. Or in the dead of night they consumed their strength with yearning, and clasped at a dream that still evaded them, "on wings that follow down the paths of sleep."

In Watergate Street you would find them; for here

THE CANAL AND BRIDGE OF SIGHS

old houses that in the open noon had appeared sad, decrepit and lovable, waken, at edge of dark, to become, in their turn, masters of our souls. They become possessed with a spirit not of man's inbreathing, and yield that unsounded, shadowy outflow of emotions which in such a time appears the main stream of the cosmic event. Past words and deeds of men, the memories of the city-builders, losing or confounding their human values of high or low, are no more than subsidiary currents, our present noblest aspirations and most poignant griefs bubbles tossed up to vanish momently on the dark surface.

But from such quietism we are at length slowly turning away. If life is shown more mysterious than our forefathers imagined, we welcome the fact. For if the risks are greater, the adventure is so much the more honourable. And whether the human deed is the main stream, or only a subsidiary current of the life of the universe, here lies our business, this is our inheritance—and no mean one—and we must enter upon it in the same spirit of romantic ardour which was our forefathers'. This present time is like that hour in the night when, according to an old superstition, the sleeper must turn on his couch or his heart will stop beating. While the soul is brooding over a nameless fear, the body turns unconsciously, and as night wears on towards dawn, the pulse, so long fluttering and pausing in doubtful rhythms, reasserts minute by minute its ancient vigour, and new light, filtering in rosy through closed lids, transfuses all dreams with eagerness and joy.

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DEVA

"Penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos."

§ 1.

In the Grosvenor Museum there is a fragment of a small altar having an inscription in Greek letters: "To the saviour-gods I, Hermogenes the physician, set up this altar." If we could bring back to life this Greek army doctor of the Valeria Victrix, how much more at home he would feel in the courtyard of the castle to-day than he could ever have been in Roman Chester! The new buildings would speak a familiar language to him, making him forget the crashing, buzzing, and hooting of modern traffic in the neighbouring road, the entrance gateway especially moving in him, by its faint suggestion of the Athenian propylæa, the same tears which those carvings on the Carthaginian shrine moved in the shipwrecked Æneas and his comrades—"Quæ regio in terris nostri non plena laboris?"* He would

* I append a note by Professor Haverfield: "Greek, etc., in Roman times does not mean Hellene. The man might have been born in Cyrene or Baalbek, or even Nice." For my own purposes, however, I am imagining that Hermogenes was in fact a Hellene.

require of us a temple modelled upon the Parthenon, to provide a fitting consummation for the main entrance. In sympathy with his mood, let us imagine ourselves back in Athens, looking towards the Parthenon for inspiration, and exchanging for these foul contagious vapours the equable climate of Attica, with its skies open for so much of the year. The lines of the hills all round are boldly and sharply modelled, and every detail on them shows up luminous and delicate. Nothing eludes; all is sharply defined. Human reason is at rest in this land where balance, lucidity, and order prevail; it can find nothing not germane to itself, obeying the laws of its own being. What, then, should man produce here if not an art sane and finished; what temple but the Parthenon, perfect in harmony and simplicity? It withholds none of its own beauty. There are no prodigious arches soaring up through gloom, no galleries carried along at dizzy heights beneath the vague flare of stained windows, no extravagant riot of crocket and cusp and finial. There is nothing here but symmetry and graceful restraint. It has no secrets for the imagination, neither has it any for the intellect. You discern at a glance which are the main structural features and which are ornamental. There is no strife of thrust and counter-thrust between vault and buttress and arch, to bewilder the eye and baffle the understanding.

So leave the Parthenon, rising incandescent in the Attic blue, and let our Greek physician have his will. Suppose a Doric temple to rise on the spot where

afterwards Chester Gaol was to be built. Is he satisfied yet? No. He will find reasons, of course, to account for the failure—the clumsiness of Britannic workmen, the impossibility of reproducing a millionth part of the effect of the sculptures of Pheidias. All these are entirely wrong, the true reason being that the Parthenon is out of harmony both with the actual landscape and with all the associations of the countryside.

The temper of our people is romantic, that of the Greeks is comparatively unromantic. Naturally so; Romance dies of inanition in a countryside that is cut and polished like a gem. It demands effects of mist and such blurred and wavering outlines in things that what looks like a mill at one moment may the very next moment look like a giant in armour. It shuns reasonableness, which says that A cannot be both B and not B. Now, reasonableness, as was suggested above, is the life-principle of Hellas, and expresses itself at once in its equable climate, its clear atmosphere, and the whole range of its human achievement. Any elements opaque to reason in their folk-lore the Greeks always explained away and minimized; the sufferings of Œdipus, at first sight so cruel and undeserved, are finally justified as an exactly measured retribution to the house of Labdacus. But Romance desires that the dark places of the earth should be full of wickedness. It peoples its blurred landscapes with magicians, and ghouls, and witches, and gnomes, and endows them with such powers that the issue between good and evil remains doubtful up to the very last.

THE CROSS

It flourishes best, not when the sky is serene, but when it is crammed with fantastic and menacing cloud-shapes, or is one uniform, soul-depressing grey. It desires tremendous odds. It will find in the Dee, not a useful and paternal presence, but a mysterious creature which may be very good or very bad. If the waters of the Dee are grey and lifeless, says the maker of our folk-lore, just consider where it had its rising—in the gloomy hills of Wales, swathed in dank vapours, in valleys resonant with the cries of evil and anguished spirits.

How could any building fashioned after the Greek model be in place on the knoll overlooking the Dee? It would be dull and sad, bewildered by our November fogs, our harsh spring, and tepid summer.

§ 2

Hermogenes could not understand the true cause of the failure of his sham Parthenon, because he could not understand the inner meaning of Romance. Still less capable of comprehending it were the Romans. It is a common mistake to think of these world-conquerors as beings after the type of our own great adventurers, Saxon, Norman and Elizabethan. Men suppose it must have been with the Romans some high poetic movement of the soul which, obeying the lure of horizons, thus brought together the ends of the earth. By the nature of our temperaments we are almost forced to imagine that not very dissimilar motives were at work in the

Crusaders and in the Roman conquerors of Britain, to hear in the harsh, dry roar of the buccina the same overtones as in the bugle-blasts of a knight-errant sounding his challenge beneath the gateway of giant or fell magician. Nevertheless, it would be only the Northerner in us that would find a touch of the knight-errant in Scapula or Paulinus. By a humorous paradox of etymology there was remarkably little romance about the Romans. They never carried a campaign into twilight lands for the sake of an abstract idea. Ultima Thule was to them strictly a business proposition.

Compare for a moment the advance of a Roman legion through an unknown country and that of a band of Crusaders in Asia Minor. The latter looked upon war partly as an opportunity for the display of certain moral qualities, partly as an exciting amusement (one can imagine them talking of war much as we talk of Rugby football). They scorned anything in warfare which appeared mean or utilitarian ; thus they did not like ambushes, they despised scouting, they could not away with night attacks or tricks of any kind. In short, the Crusaders' idea of battle was a "hammer and tongs" idea. They never organized an Intelligence Department, and discipline simply did not exist. They marched through the heart of Asia, a country whose resources and dangers were unknown to them, in no order, without taking any regard for the climate, without organizing a commissariat, without sending out scouts, without attempting to guard communica-

tions. They were out in search of adventures, and were certainly not disappointed. Now consider the legions which Suetonius led in Britain, marching in a perfectly ordered array, each man knowing exactly his place and duty. The general has taken care to discover the nature of the country ahead of him, and he has organized everything accordingly. The commissariat is excellently administered; and night by night, wherever the legions halt, a fortified camp will be built—built upon a scientific plan, so that each division of the army will know in exactly what spot its quarters and those of its officers are situated, and will go direct to that spot without waste of time or confusion. The secret of it all is organization resting upon an absolutely perfect discipline, for discipline is the key to the understanding of all Roman history. The legion was not out in search of adventures, but to achieve a definite object. There was no talk of "The White Man's Burden"; Roman imperialism was unashamedly exploitative; indeed, it had no reason for shame, though there is no space now to argue on that subject. The Romans conquered Britain partly because the Britons seemed likely to be troublesome neighbours to their Gallic provincials, but chiefly to obtain new slaves and more gold for Rome. There is certainly a theory, supported by some eminent moderns, that Julius Cæsar was striving to build up Gaul, Britain, and Spain into something which should serve to countervail the softening, pernicious influence on Rome of the East—Greece, Syria, and Egypt. If so, all this only goes to

show how much greater Cæsar was than his contemporaries; in other words, that he was not a typical Roman.

The Roman, however, was not simply a greedy monster; he was as passionately devoted to Rome as the Parisian to Paris. Just as in Tunis or Algiers the Frenchman tries to build up a pale imitation of the boulevards and cafés of Paris, so, wherever he could, the Roman built his baths, and porticoes, and circus. There were temples and basilicæ and forums, and the general plan of Roman daily life was observed—only the blue sky and clear Italian air were wanting, the silvery-grey of the olive-grove and the shadowy maze of vine-plants.

Such miniature Romes were Bath and Silchester, but Chester was different, as Professor Haverfield has pointed out. Roman Chester—Deva—sheds very little light on the softer and more refined side of the conquerors. The Roman walls, especially the parts surviving from the second century, are magnificent; so solid and thorough and skilful was the work, that it appears in our own day much less worn than the parts built in the thirteenth century, or even later. The Romans laid very large blocks, accurately squared, and set them with some regard to the effects of weathering. But contrast with this magnificent engineering the remains of Roman art in Deva, as preserved in the Grosvenor Museum. Consider the tombstones—that, for instance, of Cæcilius Avitus; it is rather like the relief that a child will carve you with a wooden spade in the sand.

At first one is inclined to despise the builders of Deva as Philistines. That, again, is unfair; the fact is simply that the Romans did send their most skilful masons and plumbers to Chester, but did not send their artists. What was there to attract Roman artists to the place? As much as there is to attract members of the New English Art Club to Rawal Pindi. Britain was just the farthest outpost of the Roman Empire, and Deva was one of its remotest fortresses. The Romans built it to be a campaigning base against the Welsh and the tribes across the Mersey; the place had no economic possibilities for them,* because there was no idea of any large commerce with Ireland; actually the Irish Channel must have held more roving Scot and Pict pirates than any other description of craft. In short, Deva was a huge police-station with a staff of some five thousand legionary soldiers, the whole splendidly equipped and organized with regard to police duties, and with regard to that alone.

Wherever troops are permanently stationed there will, of course, grow up shops and suburbs; retired soldiers will settle down with their families, and some of the natives will in time become Romanized, and come in as close to the walls as possible. The Roman suburbs (*canabæ*, or "huts"), as one would expect, stretched from the gate that led Londonwards, and

* There were lead-mines in Flintshire exploited by the Romans. Two pigs of this lead are in the Grosvenor Museum, stamped with the name of the reigning emperor.

there were others between the western wall* and the river bank. It must, nevertheless, have been a dull place, and the garrison must have come to loathe it as soon as the country round, becoming pacified, ceased to provide excitement in the way of raids and night attacks. Occasionally a mutiny against some unpopular general, or the prospect of joining with the other Britannic legions in the fascinating sport of Cæsar-making, may have relieved the monotony of life in a frontier town. Their officers may have attempted to draw comfort from conning over the "Æneid," with its gospel of the "fatum Romanum"; but on a grey, drizzly November day was it possible to rejoice in the imperial destiny of Rome which had brought them hither? To the common soldiers even this reflection was impossible; they were not even Roman in anything but name. They came from any and every country of Europe, mostly from the banks of the Rhine and from Southern Gaul, but also from the central Balkans, from the edge of the Sahara, from Greece, and from Syria. But they were scarcely educated enough to admire intelligently, even though they were dimly conscious of it, the grandeur of the idea of Rome—that power which had forged itself so mighty a weapon out of such strange scraps of barbarism. They understood two emotions, the excitement of war

* The present walls do not coincide with the Roman, except along part of the north and east sides. The Roman west wall, roughly speaking, followed the line of Nicholas Street, the south wall that of White Friars Lane and Pepper Street.

and lust for gold. Life in Deva was too monotonous for them—the same eternal round: meat and wine and sticky sweetstuffs and cock-fighting and a smiling centurion when you had money, but more often cold porridge, vinegar, and leeks, and not a stiver to buy off the centurion's quick wrath. Some part of the heavy days they whiled away by carving in soft sandstone the sculptures now in the Museum—a tombstone for a dead comrade and benefactor, with a relief that shows Actæon being turned into a stag, or an altar to the "genius"—patron saint, so to speak—of the centuria, or to the mystic "Mother Goddesses," or an antefix displaying the legionary badge, a wild boar charging furiously.

There is one episode in the history of Roman Chester which it is worth while to dwell upon now, because it led up to the connection between Chester and that noble soldier Julius Agricola. It was in the days when Trebellius Maximus was Governor of the island. The military detested him, especially Cælius Roscius, commander of the Twentieth Legion, between whom and Trebellius there was a long-standing enmity. Roscius, if he did not actually spur on the seditious temper of his legion, was not likely to hold them back, if they should take the business into their own hands and march against Trebellius. This is what very nearly did eventuate.

It is a pity the corrosive pen of Tacitus has made no sketch of this disturbance such as he drew of the mutinies in Pannonia and Lower Germany. The

latter, however, are material from which to construct an impression of the crisis that occurred. One can stand in fancy with Roscius on the steps of the prætorium; the space in front, to-day called "The Cross," is crammed with soldiers in tunic and leather breeches, centurions distinguished by their greaves and vine-staffs, and a sediment of camp-followers, dangerous blackguards always at the bottom of any trouble in the garrison. Roscius surveys with elation the hundreds of hard, brutal countenances, and remains undismayed, assailed by a tempest of cries: "Down with the centurions! Scourge them to death with their own vine-staffs!" "Death to Trebellius!" "To Camulodunum!" "To Rome!" "Give us our remission, Roscius!" "A jug-full of steel for the camp præfect!" "Down with furlough-fees!" "Less years and more denarii!" "Down with Trebellius!" "Give us Trebellius, and we will eat him alive!" "Up tusks, boars, and at him!" "When will Cæsar abolish Trebellius?" "Who is Cæsar?" "Nero!" "No, no, Vitellius!" "Roscius, Roscius! Hail, Roscius Cæsar!" "Down with Trebellius! Choke him with his own sesterces, the money-grabber!" But the clamour dies down as a small knot of men fight their way to the front with fist and flat of the sword, and hoist up one of their number on their shoulders to be spokesman. The burden of his speech is that the legions wished Roscius to lead them against Trebellius. They accuse Trebellius of keeping back their pay and cutting their supplies short, of taking money from the natives not to molest them, of refusing

to portion out the best ground to veterans for their farms. "Lead us to Trebellius," the orator cried; "lead us to Rome if it pleases thee." Suddenly a voice from the edge of the crowd exclaimed: "Too late, boys; the bird is flown!" There was silence at first, and then a new confusion and clamour.

Upon inquiry it was discovered that Trebellius had, in fact, made good his escape into Gaul. A new Governor was sent in his stead, and though the discipline of the Valeria Victrix had in the meantime been restored and still remained firm, it was thought better to get rid or Roscius. In his stead Julius Agricola was made Legatus. With his strength of will and unfailing tact he seems to have quickly smoothed out the high nerve-tensions of the legion.

This connection with Julius Agricola is the brightest memory we have of Roman Chester. It is no place here to enlarge upon the portrait his great son-in-law Tacitus has painted of him. Agricola survives, with a very few other names, as a Roman soldier at once prudent and broad-minded, powerful and kindly. He was no less able a general than Suetonius Paulinus, but was free from the latter's savage temper. He did perhaps as much as any other single man to build up the island into a strong and prosperous province.

Gerald du Barri, who visited Chester in the twelfth century, gives a highly coloured description of the Roman ruins still remaining. He leaves his reader with the impression that Deva was a second Rome. Amongst other things he speaks of "immense palaces,

a gigantic tower, beautiful baths, remains of temples and sites of theatres . . . subterranean constructions, vaults with passages." This is not the only occasion on which Gerald du Barri * draws the long-bow (a weapon invented by the South Welsh). Professor Haverfield has shown pretty conclusively that we need not mourn too heavily for marvels of architecture destroyed by the Saxons. When the Valeria Victrix left Deva it left, not a town, but a collection of barracks inside a ring-wall. Almost the only building that could claim any architectural merit was the prætorium (the headquarters)—it stood where St. Peter's Church now is, and some pillar-bases behind Northgate Street (west side) preserve its memory.

We do not know the date at which Chester was denuded of its soldiers ; it was probably in that strange gloomy twilight of the fourth century. All that was left of Rome to defend Chester was the tombstones that formed the core of its ring-wall. Incidentally, could any better proof be wanted of the absence of romance in Romans than this, that they used the tombstones of their own dead to build walls for their fortresses ? The cemetery outside the north wall was very handy for the wall-builders—that was how they looked at the situation ! A romantic people, if any necessity had been able to drive them to such a deed, would have covered the memory of the deed with imaginative stories ; at the least riddles would have grown up—

* Dr. B. C. A. Windle has a pleasing phrase—viz., "embellished in the Geraldine manner."

"What is that city whose dwellers defend it even after their death?"*—and in actual stress of siege the defenders would have felt themselves heartened by the unseen presence of the spirits of the immemorial dead.

Though Roman imperialism had never striven for a high ideal (even Virgil could make nothing better of it than "to spare the vassal and wear down the proud with war"), it certainly toughened the fibre of Britain, and enabled the people to withstand longer than did any of the other Roman provincials the attacks of barbarian invaders. We know exactly nothing of what happened inside Deva during the period, rather more than two centuries, which extends from the departure of its legion to its destruction. The whole country was upside down, and Chester, so easily reached from the sea, must have been constantly harassed by the Picts and Scots, and by occasional squadrons of Angles or Jutes or Saxons.

§ 3.

At Bangor-on-Dee there was in the sixth century one of the largest and most famous monasteries in Europe. Its chief claim to memory is that it produced Pelagius, founder of a dangerous heresy, which denied the doctrine of original sin. He was of corpulent habit and one eye, and his theological opponents were not above ridiculing these physical blemishes. He,

* It might have run thus:

"Dic mihi, quam functorum acies custodiat urbem
Non tamen infensis conspicienda viris."

however, has no business in the foreground of our story. At the end of the sixth century the last Abbot of Bangor was head of the representatives who met with Augustine to discuss terms upon which the British Church could join hands with him in preaching to the Saxons. Augustine tried to carry matters with a high hand, and though the concessions which he required were small, the British representatives were angered by his manner, and refused to comply. Thereupon the haughty Roman priest left them, prophesying that the Saxons would surely destroy them. His prophecy was fulfilled within ten years under the very walls of this city.

The history of these centuries will always remain for the imagination a landscape full of ambiguous, menacing shapes. The Battle of Chester, for instance—we do not know the actual battlefield, the numbers on either side, the time of year, the names of the British leaders, whether it preceded or ended a siege of the city—needless to say, we know nothing of the tactics or the arms on either side. The only feature which stands out in tradition is the one which constitutes the horror of the affair. From Bangor monastery a thousand monks in white robes had gone out to fight the Saxons with their prayers. The British soldiers were defeated, and the Saxon Æthelfrith slew the regiment of monks to a man on the field of battle.

The Saxons followed up their victory by laying Chester waste. They broke down its ring-wall, and burnt all that was inflammable and stole all that could be carried

away. It was then the city earned its name of West (*i.e.*, Waste) Chester. For many years within the broken ring-wall winds swirled dust and ash in light eddies across the ruins of Caerleon, great slabs of stone piled up in fantastic pyramids : here two walls left standing with part of a ceiling, all blackened by fire ; there lintel and gate-posts brayed into dust beneath portions of a fallen cornice. What had once been, as it were, a paragraph in stone proclaiming in magnificent prose the imperial power of Rome was all dislocated now, strewn abroad in broken fragments of sentences, interjections, sudden silences, meaningless reiterations. Nature by imperceptible gradations remoulded the confused heaps of ruins, till, where a city had stood, were broad hummocky mounds covered with brambles and trees, though still here and there, perhaps, a single pillar or a fragment of a wall, that had measured its strength with wind and frost, stood up above the tangled vegetation, every ledge and fissure loaded with grasses and moss and flowers. The line of the Roman streets was still marked by broad shallow depressions roughly bisecting each other at right angles.

After the brief lurid glare of this story of massacre, the darkness falls as impenetrable as ever on the history of Chester. There are vague noises and outcries in this awful night, but no sight is vouchsafed. The Danes came, we know, during the ninth century, gliding in from the Irish Channel in their long snaky craft, the black dragons that had tempted the Atlantic and carried Biorn and Leif from Greenland to America.

They did not at first stay in the Dee Estuary longer than was necessary to allow for the lifting of cattle and slaves. They went, leaving hamlets on fire and priests lying in the mud with the "blood-eagle" carved on their backs. Later on they came to settle in the land they had ruined, till Alfred's sons drove them back or forced them into unwilling obedience.

"Velæda," says Tacitus, "was absolute ruler of the Bructeran people after the ancient German custom, not unmingled with superstition, of looking upon most female seers as goddesses."—The contrast between Saxon and Roman Chester could not be more vividly presented than by emphasizing the fact that the former was founded by a woman. Æthelfleda, sister of Alfred the Great, and Countess of Mercia, was not a prophetess like Velæda, but she was a ruler, and what she did for Chester would be evidence of her military genius. The Saxons were mostly fighters rather than soldiers. Æthelfleda was an exception; she saw the cardinal importance of fortifying Chester if England was ever to be ruled by one King. At the very opening of the tenth century the ring-wall of Chester was repaired and a regular Saxon "burgh" erected on the site of the present castle. The burgh was simply a big mound of earth; in idea it resembled a child's sand-castle; at its base was a ditch and a wooden palisade, the summit again encircled with wooden walls. The work which this veritable Britomart had thus begun was consummated within the century by Edgar. At this point one must, I suppose, part company with the serious historian, for surely no historian will accept as true the

story of Edgar being rowed on the Dee by six vassal Kings! Why, then, let it be called a myth, or a tradition, or an old wife's tale. Old wives' tales are generally at the back of most of the important movements in the world. An old wife's tale is generally a young hero's religion, and historical truth is after all small beer; it never ran through a man's veins like fire. Just imagine Brutus on the eve of Cæsar's murder brought face to face with Mommsen's account of the origin of the Roman Republic; imagine Charlotte Corday browsing on Fraser's "Golden Bough." It does not matter whether as an actual fact Edgar was rowed up and down the Dee; the important thing is that the myth should have sprung up at all, and that Chester should have been accepted as the scene of the story. The Battle of Chester in 607 had been one of the two decisive battles by which the Saxons split the island in three, and it was considered the doom of the British Church. And the same city is assigned as the place in which the Saxon power, touching its zenith and symbolizing itself in one man's person, paid homage to the Christian faith. One city saw the triumph of chaos and the restoration of order.

Thus, as if by some supernatural power, the city claimed its men again. The Saxons used to hate towns because some defilement seemed to proceed out of them, infecting a man's hardihood and nobility. Now, however, they had passed through that stage of social philosophy, and had planted a settlement within the Waste-Chester, and the Powers That Be must have wondered, waiting to see what shape this strange

growth would assume. Of the amorphous period there are delightful relics in St. John's Church—certain stone crosses of a pattern which, according to one antiquarian, can only be described negatively: "They are un-Anglian, un-Scottish, un-Irish, un-Scandinavian." By degrees the settlement took on more definite shape, as the Saxons became more commercialized. They never built in the great style. Chester was a large, rambling wooden village, quite as much lost, maybe, within its walls as Stamboul is to-day; but the main outlines or the present streets were roughed in. A church grew up on the ruins of the Roman prætorium, very likely a wooden church, or if in stone it was a crude, pitiful, yet wonderfully suggestive, effort to rekindle those Roman glories which their forefathers had striven so hard to extinguish. For the rest no better can be done than to quote the description J. R. Green gives of the market-place of the town. "Among the piles of cheese which then, as now, formed the main produce of the Cheshire plain, the piles of bannock and barley bread and the crates of fish which the fishwives brought from the fisheries of the Dee, its sturdy burghers pushed their way through a motley crowd, in which the trader from the Danish towns in Ireland strove in his Northern tongue to draw buyers to his gang of slaves, while the Welsh kerne, wrapped in his blanket, who had driven across the bridge the small and wiry cattle from his native hills, chattered as he might with the hardly less wild Cumbrian from the lands beyond the Ribble."

STANLEY HOUSE

Travelling through this Saxon period of Chester's history is very like travelling through one of those vast Teutonic pine-forests from which the Saxons themselves had come. There is the same gloom alternating with rare clearings, when the eye is so dazzled by sudden light as not clearly to distinguish what is set before it; there are the same mysterious and sinister sounds from far or near breaking the oppressive silence, the same sense of the smallness and briefness of humanity. We emerge to find open country indeed, but a wilderness. For a second if not a third time the city is sacked and its citizens put to the sword, and still the destroyers are Northmen. It was in December through the deep snow that William the Conqueror came swooping from Yorkshire with his hordes of mailed horsemen, against whom the Saxon foot-soldiers could not stand. One Saxon virtue the city then possessed, and has never lost—loyalty. It was the last town to fall before the Conqueror. That loyalty finds expression—by accident, if you like; it does not matter—in a characteristic story. It is that Harold did not die on Senlac Hill, but "escaped to the countie of Chester and lived there holyly, as man troweth, an anker's lyfe, in Saynt James's celle, fast by Saynt John's chyrch, and made a goode ende and was knowen by his last confessyon. . . ." The city suffered for its loyalty, as the brief, dry entry in Domesday shows: "When Earl Hugh got it, there were two hundred and five houses less than in King Edward's time. It had been grievously wasted."

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III

GLADIUS CESTRIÆ

"Thou art of more honour and might than the hills of the robbers. . . ."

§ 1.

THOUGH Rome's rule passed, still her memory holds, and cannot lose, a spiritual sway. She "wins a glory" through "being far." Men forget her failures: her fall, which once was pronounced well merited, now seems pathetic. Farther back in history, when her temporal empire, her actual stones and streets, seemed eternal, the idea of her power intoxicated men. The city of Rome was the world's desire, and men fought about the steps of her throne for the glory of possessing her.

There is an easy way for us to realize how this idea of Rome dominated the motions of the mediæval mind. We have only to contemplate any typical piece of Romanesque architecture—say the nave of St. John's Church. The name at once is significant. The idea which lies behind all this massiveness and height is nothing else but to suggest eternal dominion—Roman imperial dominion. And remembering what the

Normans were—pirates with a touch of megalomania—we can understand how to them, of all barbarians, the idea of Rome would make an irresistible appeal. It encouraged them, for instance, in their adventurousness. It sent them roaming vast distances, and fixed their attempts to establish kingdoms in the face of overwhelming odds on alien shores. As they had been lucky enough to evolve the most efficient military type of the age—the mailed horseman — they not infrequently overcame the odds, as in Sicily and Southern Italy, and established themselves for several centuries.

So much of what they did was on a big scale. William the Conqueror lays waste three-quarters of Yorkshire, and devotes a great part of another county to a deer-forest. To come nearer home, we have our own Earl of Chester, Hugh of Avranches, Hugh Lupus, excessive in his sins and in his repentance. There was nothing mean about him. He ruled here in Chester with as wide a sway as any man in England next to the King himself, and the token of his power was the sword of Chester, which you may see to-day in the British Museum. His life was mostly spent in conflicts against the Welsh, who nicknamed him "Hugh Vraw" ("Hugh the Fat"), and tradition has given him an evil reputation. One figures him a vast-shouldered, corpulent person with a beaky nose rising out of a dark, heavy-jowled face. He was coarse, cruel, and gluttonous, and a great hunter—in all these things a typical Norman ; Norman too in his gainfulness and shrewd common sense, which made him a trusted counsellor of Henry I. He built

a weir to bring water to his mill, and reserved to himself the right of taking salmon in the Dee—both these things brought him in money.* And though in this "he thought it no shame to do what it is shame to be telling of," though he was cruel and gainful, he brought peace to Chester. He found the town in ruins: at his death it was reckoned among the principal centres of commerce in the island. Hugh smote the mountain-folk with a heavy hand. Only when he was abroad in Normandy in 1094 did they dare to attempt reprisals in force, and when Hugh returned he exacted a terrible punishment, visiting them with slaughter and mutilation. In Anglesea he stabled his hounds in a church, and during the night they went mad.

In their dealings with the Welsh, the Normans considered, probably, that they were merely exterminating vermin, or, in more cheerful moments, looked upon their campaigns as a sort of hunt on a superior scale. Not but what the Welsh could do much mischief in the reign of a weak Earl or the absence of a strong one. We have mentioned the raid of 1094; there were others in 1111, 1146, 1214, 1256, and the Earls of Chester were more than once in peril of their persons. The story of Earl Randle Blundeville's narrow escape at Rhuddlan will be told presently. There is also the story about Earl Richard, son and successor of Hugh Lupus, who, on his way to St.

* Perhaps this is too ugly a picture of him. Students of Anselm tell me that, if Hugh Lupus was loved and admired by Anselm, he cannot have been a really bad man.

Winifred's Well, was cut off and driven into Basingwerk Abbey. A messenger managed to slip through the Welsh to Chester, but nevertheless the case seemed desperate. The young Earl applied himself in prayer to St. Werburgh. He was still at his prayers, his followers had probably given up all hope, and the monks were waiting to see their roof set on fire above their heads, when the incredible report went round that a large force of armed men, with the banner of William of Halton, the Earl's constable, was approaching from the east. Yet eastward was the estuary of the Dee, and the coast road was blocked by multitudes of Welsh! In answer to Earl Richard's prayer, St. Werburgh had raised new sandbanks in the Dee Estuary, and it was across these that the constable had led his relief force.

The ferocity of Hugh the Wolf was inherited by his descendants. An act of Hugh Cyveilioc, fourth Earl, shows this. After a certain battle, in which he was victorious, he beheaded hundreds of Welshmen, carried home their heads, and made of this grisly burden a mound in Boughton, which was not levelled away for nearly four hundred years. Sometimes the campaigns were conducted by the King himself, with levies from all over England, whenever the Welsh seemed for various causes to be more than usually formidable.

There is practically no material for constructing a picture of Chester in this period. Architecturally there could have been little, if any, change since the Saxon period, except that the Abbey of St. Werburgh began

to be built; but of that we shall speak later. The streets were probably unpaved, the population small, the shops few (in that century this was not inconsistent with the place being a fairly busy shipping centre). The houses were of wattle and mud—in the case of the richer burghers perhaps wooden planks formed the walls. Most of the inhabitants probably depended for their living, not only on commerce, but also on the produce of fields outside the walls. To tell the truth, the town would have developed more quickly had it not been for the constant presence of the Earl. He would be suspicious of any movement towards independence, and would be careful to exact all dues—forcing each of his "men" to spend so many days' labour on his (the Earl's) land, ploughing, sowing, harvesting, etc. Now, you cannot develop a large business as a coppersmith or a weaver if so many days a week have to be spent away from your shop. Moreover, you might not improbably have been called out to fight against the Welsh—by no means a proud task in days when foot-soldiery were looked upon as a necessary but contemptible piece of military furniture. If only the King were your landlord it would be different. Kings are always needy, and prepared to take money in exchange for service. But for the present your landlord is not the King, a hundred and seventy miles away in London, but Hugh Lupus or Randle Gernons, at your very gates, determined that you shall do your whole duty and remain conveniently dependent. In 1237 all this will be altered: the King will take over the Earldom of Chester, and then there will be no

stopping you ; you and your brethren will forthwith blossom out into a Corporation, with Mayor, and Aldermen, and Councillors, and law-courts, and leave to collect your own dues.

One act of Hugh Lupus, the foundation of St. Werburgh's Abbey, did as much as any possible series of repressive measures to shackle the municipal life of the place. For the abbey occupied very nearly one-quarter of the area within the walls, and all this was destined to remain, down to the Reformation, completely outside the authority of the Mayor and Corporation—in technical terms, it was " an independent soke." It is quite unlikely—almost impossible—that Hugh Lupus could foresee the quarrels destined to arise between citizens and monks in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. He founded the abbey for the good of his own soul, and for the worship of God and His saints. It was the familiar story—the wicked baron drawing near the end of his days and anxious to make his peace with God—though that is an unfair way of stating the case. In the first place, had you suggested to Hugh Lupus that he was irreligious, he would have been really shocked and hurt, and you might have spent a night in his kennels, gagged and bound. Though he never indulged in philosophical and theological abstractions, yet in fact and action he distinguished between religion and morality. He was immoral, but deeply religious. He could not see any inconsistency in ordering the mutilation of a score of Welsh captives on his way to celebrating the Mass. In

the second place, while he admitted his sinfulness (and this second consideration helps to explain the first), he genuinely and unquestioningly believed that he could balance his account of good or evil by so much money spent on charity, by the rehearsing of so many paters and aves, the burning of so many candles, and so on. It was not a piece of soft self-delusion on his part—the man cannot have lacked the most desperate courage—it was what he had been allowed and encouraged to believe.

To pass on from this discursive psychology, towards the end of the eleventh century, when he had now for more than twenty years been Earl, Hugh Lupus conceived the idea of founding a monastery and church dedicated to St. Werburgh. He sent to his friend Anselm, Abbot of Bec in Normandy and one of the finest men of that age, to help him in the work. Anselm refused twice ; he was afraid lest his coming to England should be construed as an attempt to direct public attention towards himself at a time when the See of Canterbury was vacant. But upon a third request from Hugh, coupled with a warning that Anselm might find cause to repent too late of refusing a friend in need, he changed his mind and crossed over to England. Not twenty years later Hugh Lupus, sick to death, was received, a monk, into the cloister of his own foundation. There must have been something infinitely pathetic in the spectacle of this great mountain of a man—too unwieldy in his graceless old age to walk —borne along in a litter in monkish habit ; yet I do not think any would have dared to proffer pity to the

terrible old man. He died within three days of his reception into the monastery.

Not so fortunate in his latter end was another of his house, though his equal in religious benefactions, as in ferocity and military prowess. This was Randle Gernons, a great warrior who took a chief part in capturing King Stephen at the Battle of Lincoln in 1141. Randle's chief benefaction was to found the Benedictine nunnery of St. Mary in Chester, and to enrich it with various lands. In spite of this he was excommunicated, and died in his sins, though the nunnery of his foundation did perhaps even more than the richer and more powerful monastery of St. Werburgh to preserve clean and reverend the name of Christianity.

GH OF LEW

§ 2.

"Sur le pont d'Avignon
Tout le monde y danse."

Passing a river, like any act carrying with it a certain finality, is romantic. What do "Rubicon" and "Styx" stand for? A bridge invites you to explore the unknown; also it challenges the unknown to send dashing across at you all its dark powers. A bridge is a meeting-place, as the Avignon ballad goes on to record—"Tout le monde y passe." Wait but long enough on London Bridge: you will find the man you seek. To build a bridge is great magic. We have yoked the river-god, deprived him of his victims,

rendered ineffective freshet and whirlpool. All this the quick, romance-loving Avignonnais expressed in a symbolic dance on the bridge of St. Benezet. No wonder that shepherd-boy Benezet was canonized, because he took no rest till he had persuaded the citizens to accept his message from God that a bridge must be built! No wonder each bridge had its own shrine! No wonder at Rome the chief priest was the bridge-builder! Sometimes a bridge seems alive: at Chester, when the river is large with rain, or a spring-tide is turning to the ebb, the strife between bridge and river-god is plain to see. The water growls and claws at the piers, which in turn seem actually to be thrusting their bulk forward, dividing the rough current. It is an exhilarating sight, that stirs and freshens and braces you.

Chester Bridge teaches the proper use of red sandstone—a neglected lesson. Architects have sometimes treated the soft, loose texture like granite or marble, which give a clean, hard edge, and the colour is never considered. But the bridge has solved these problems of colour and outline with its boldly heaped masses, naked of detail, and its expanse of purple shadow, with no flawed shafts and puckered capitals, with no arcading once delicately ribbed for the frost to erode and tarnish. It has, instead, a certain sturdiness and virility. None of this effect was intended by its builders: its beauty is "accidental," like the beauty of a tree or a crag. The asymmetry of its seven arches calls up a grotesque fancy of some monster

wallowing deep in the river with all its mouths wide agape.

This stone bridge is supposed to be barely more than three hundred years old. There was a wooden structure formerly, flimsy and dangerous. Floods often swept away the spars and trestles, and then during several years it would be left a wreck by the townsmen, lazy or discouraged, till higher powers forced them to repair it. Was this apparent slackness really civic pride?—as if the city were saying, "Visit me. I permit it; but I will condescend to make no advances. If you wish to come, you will have to build the bridge yourself." Possibly, on the other hand, the traffic between Chester and North Wales was so small that it was not worth while to maintain the bridge; even when the bridge was standing, it was so flimsy as to be useless for heavy traffic, and carts with iron-bound wheels were forbidden to cross it.

In April of 1189, at least, the bridge was standing. Imagine, on a day of fickle weather, a crowd of citizens lining Bridge Street, and massed close against the Bridge Gate. The Warden of the Bridge Gate has mustered his guard to keep the way clear, and at the bridge-end the Earl's men, in their quilted gambesons and chain-mail byrnies, prevent access to the bridge. Archbishop Baldwin has been preaching the Crusade through Wales from Teivi-side to Carnarvon, and to-day he is to reach Chester. The Abbot of St. Werburgh's, Robert de Hastyngs, with his feudal dependents, has gone out beyond Handbridge to meet him.

While the crowd waits, consider the Earl, Randle Blundeville, a mite of a man. At Lincoln the French Pretender, Louis VIII., had for some time been awaiting the advance of Randle's column. When at length he appeared, one of those who had been chafing at the delay cried out in the Earl's hearing: "What! have we waited so long for such a manikin?" "By God and our Lady, whose church this is," said the little Earl, "before to-morrow evening I will seem to thee stronger and stouter and taller than that steeple!" He kept his word: next day he slew the scoffer.* Moreover, he seized on Louis, and in Lincoln Cathedral made him swear to leave the kingdom. Then he sent for his own future King, who was hiding in a cowshed, and, as Walter de Wittlesey relates, "delivered to him seizin of the kingdom for his inheritance." Randle de Blundeville was famous throughout England, and men made his fiery deeds into ballads. "I can noughte perfitly my 'pater-noster' as the priest it syngeth," says Sloth in "Piers the Plowman," "but I can rymes of Robyn Hood and Randolf erle of Chestre." His name had weight in the councils of many Kings; his approval moved the Pope himself. Though he feared no man, he was of a simple piety, a plain and modest soul, hating subtleties on the one hand, and on the other incapable of the long-sighted political wisdom of his friend Hubert de Burgh. He

* This story does not fit in with the account of the battle given by Dr. Oman, and based upon "The Song of William the Marshall."

is a good instance of the Anglification of the Norman aristocracy, typically English in his hatred of priestcraft, his sense of fairness, his tenacity, independence, and, above all, in his blunt common sense. Here is an instance of the last quality: Once, when Randle was engaged in a Welsh campaign, Henry III. suddenly summoned him to Court. Randle sent back some such message as this: "I will come when I have made these your territories safe." He was loyal to King John right up to the end, even in the Magna Carta year, and yet did not hesitate openly to rebuke his shameless immorality.

"He was a very parfit gentle knight."

Picture him here and now, planted square on his feet, τετράγωνος ἀνήρ, revealing his spirit in the poise of his head and the short gestures of his clenched hand as he talks with his constable. The conversation is broken off by the sound of cheering in Handbridge. Presently the head of a procession appears in the archway of the bridge outworks. The Archbishop himself rides in front, clad in complete armour. On his surcoat is embroidered the Crusader's cross; there is joy in his countenance. By him is the Abbot of St. Werburgh's, and just behind Gerald, the Welsh historian-orator, delicate, beautiful, vain, and Ranulph de Glanville, who will not return from this Crusade, and many other men of famous name. Last come the three thousand who have followed the Cross, swept by that enthusiasm which William de Malmesbury says inspired not only

the Continental provinces, but even all who had heard the name of Christ. . . . "The Welshman left his hunting, the Scot his fellowship with vermin, the Dane his drinking-party, the Norwegian his raw fish. . . ." They are singing Crusader hymns, which form a sort of undercurrent to the continual cheering. Blundeville kneels to receive the Archbishop's blessing, but has only a cold glance for the Abbot, whom he will soon cause to be removed from his abbacy. The procession moves up without delay as far as the High Cross, and there, first the Archbishop, and after him Gerald du Barri, preach the Crusade.

The Crusade was bound to appeal to men living in a Border town. When the preacher spoke of the Seljouk Turk and Jerusalem, in thought they substituted Welshmen and their own many-spired city, and rescues and desperate leaguers under soft Western rains or just such April blue overlaced with silver clouds. To other men there—perhaps to Randle Blundeville himself—the fact would most strongly appeal that the Crusade had come to Chester out of Wales from the heart of the hills where they had so often pursued rebels, thieves and murderers. Out of Wales came the Crusade to Chester, and it was the Celt, Gerald du Barri, who drew our men to this shadowy enterprise. He stood, raised up above the crowded banners of the Archbishop, and wreathed in coils of incense vapour, his back to the High Cross, ready (with the Welshman's dramatic instinct), just at the precise right moment, to turn and fling himself down, sobbing, with his arms

about its base. All down the four streets men crowded to hear him ; on either side they lined the paths on the banks (now the Rows) in front of their houses—mud-daubed hovels with sodden thatched roofs—and each man's gaze fixed itself on the preacher's dark, spiritual beauty.

Just as Antony, gazing into the unconquerable eyes of his mistress as she bent over him, saw there "toute une mer immense où fuyaient des galères," so they, even at the height of their fine romantic rapture, might have seen in the keen, dilated eyes of the Welshman a vision of calcined Syrian landscapes, the drouthy march of badly equipped hosts, blistered and inflamed, under stupid, greedy, and disdainful leaders, the Paynim horsemen persistently hovering on the flank, rarely darting in, to disengage as rapidly before the clumsy mailed troopers of the Franks can close and crush them. One likes to think it was now that Randle Blundeville caught fire and formed the resolution (which he was not destined to carry out for years) of sailing to the rescue of Jerusalem. He, we may be sure, had no morbid premonitions of the failure of that army with which he himself sailed to the pestilent marshes of the Nile.

Those twenty years he spent in trying to hold King John to paths of honesty, in driving French Louis out of England, and in keeping down the Welsh. These still gave serious trouble.

We have dwelt in a previous chapter on the inability or unwillingness of Anglo-Norman leaders to adapt

their methods to meet different enemies. I suspect that a similar failure to adapt himself to the country and people was the reason why, in his Welsh campaign of 1214, Randle Blundeville was beaten back into Rhuddlan Castle. A mailed horseman cannot climb up a crag, nor clear a tangled coppice of bowmen ; and while your knights are galloping hot-foot up-valley against one set of mountaineers, another band of spearmen has sprung with wild screeches upon your baggage-train, massacred your sutlers and porters, and made away with your provisions and tent-furniture to the highest peak of Moel Fammau, singing derisively the twelfth-century equivalent of

> "The mountain-sheep were sweeter,
> But the valley-sheep were fatter ;
> We therefore thought it meeter
> To carry off the latter."

But, whatever the cause, it came to pass that Randle was forced to wait inside the "burh" of Rhuddlan, with the Welshmen capering round the walls, till his constable, Roger de Lacy, should come with reinforcements from Chester.

Roger de Lacy, the hero of Château Gaillard, was surnamed "Hell" for his fierceness. I imagine him a Norman adventurer of the type of Hugh Lupus—corpulent, black-browed, with a complexion like a plum dipped in bran ; ignorant, cruel, of grim humour and desperate courage. If there is any truth in the story (now to be related) of his expedition to Rhuddlan, it may be assumed that Randle had left behind him only

CHESTER CASTLE AND BRIDGE, FROM SOUTH WEST · SALMON FISHERS' BOATS IN FOREGROUND

just enough men to garrison the city. Roger would be at a loss for a force to lead out with him.

St. Werburgh's Fair was in full swing, and the idea occurred to Roger of impressing as many able-bodied men as he could lay hands on in front of the Abbey Gate. A detachment of armed retainers was despatched to arrange this. One can imagine the results—the "press-gang" and its victims surrounded by a rabble offering abuse or sympathy, among them some score of the minstrels and mummers who every midsummer gathered into Chester from every corner of England, men and women who earned their bread by dancing and tumbling and juggling with knives, by mimicking animals and drunkards, singing wanton songs or telling long stories—a disreputable gang, inheritors of infamy since the days of Laberius, careless, ribald, happy-go-lucky vagabonds,* sleeping one night on silken cushions, the next in a ditch; one hour petted by a lord, the next kicked and cuffed by sheriff's men; at their ease equally in the baron's hall and the bowsing-ken; not ignorant either of my lady's bower or the common pillory. For whatever cause—some freak on the part of a drunken leader, the taunts of a doxy, or any sudden universal emotion of a crowd—the minstrels stuck to Roger de Lacy's

* "Japers and janglers, Judas' chylderen
Feynen hem fantasies and foles hem maketh
That Paule precheth of hem, I wil nought prove it here;
'Qui turpiloquium loquitur' is Luciferes hyne."

Piers Plowman.

column, and marched alongside of them all the thirty miles to Rhuddlan. Roger did not drive them off. Probably the idea of pitting clowns against Welshmen was just within reach of his sense of humour. To keep up their spirits as they topped the last ridge, they burst into singing and capering. The besieging force, measuring their efficiency by their noisiness, and not perceiving at a distance their unwarlike antics (you must suppose one man "turning a cart-wheel," another boxing with a tame bear, others crowing like cocks and flapping their arms, while a fourth, red-faced, bellowed an obscene parody of a war-song), only stopping to note the banner of the Constable, fled precipitately from before the castle. What must have spoilt Roger's enjoyment of the situation was Randle Blundeville's jest, for he gave Roger complete command of the fellowship of minstrels in Chester—which was as much as to make him chief captain of mummers. Roger handed on the office to Henry of Dutton, and in his family it continued for centuries.

I cannot pass by Roger de Lacy without mentioning his most valiant deed, the defence of Château Gaillard against King Philip's army. On a high bluff that falls steeply to the Seine, and has the village of Le Petit Andely cuddled up at its feet, are the ruins of Richard Cœur-de-Lion's masterpiece, the Château Gaillard—"Saucy Castle." Whoever was master of it was master also of Normandy. Richard had gained much knowledge from his observation of Byzantine fortification in Syria; he added to knowledge a touch of genius, and

made the Château Gaillard so strong that he boasted that a man could hold it even if its walls were made of butter. Nevertheless, it fell in 1204, but "for nine months Roger de Lacy, Constable of Chester, held out on the rock against blockade and sap and storm; against line after line of fortified entrenchment; against mangonels and perrières which flung huge masses of rock and vessels full of burning pitch; against scaling-ladders and movable wooden towers filled with crossbow-men; against 'cats' sheathed with boiled hides which clawed their way into the walls. He saw a relieving fleet of seventy vessels repulsed and shattered on the river beneath him; he got a letter from John explicitly saying that he must expect no relief from him; he saw his outer guard taken and his inner guard fired, but till March, 1204, the citadel itself resisted everything that mediæval siege-craft could do. At last the great walls of this also yielded to a mine, and 156 starving men were disarmed after making a desperate resistance to the whole French army, which poured in at the breach."*

To turn from war and arms, there is a story in Matthew of Westminster which illustrates Blundeville's piety. He was returning by sea from the Crusades when a storm arose. Just as the seamen were about to abandon all hopes, he asked them how long it was to midnight. They replied: "Two hours." "Then labour till that time," said he. At midnight the storm ceased,

* C. R. L. Fletcher, "An Introductory History of England," vol. i., p. 173.

and the master of the ship inquired of Blundeville why he had bidden them labour to midnight. "Because," he said, "my monks and other devout people, who are of mine and my ancestors' foundation, do then rise to sing divine service; for that reason, I put confidence in their prayers."

Not only in Dieulacroix, in Coventry, and in St. Werburgh's did prayers rise for Randle Blundeville, but also in his two hospitals of St. John and St. Giles. The Blue-coat School stands on the site of St. John's Hospital, and the Blue-coat School brass band disturbs the wraiths of the "poore and sillie persons" who once found here a haven of rest and "one good loaffe" each day, together with "one great Dish full with potage" and half a gallon of "competent" ale. St. Giles' of Boughton was destroyed during the siege of 1645. It was a leper hospital, but most of its inmates were probably not lepers. It was the custom to label all sorts of diseases of the skin leprosy in the Middle Ages, because of the Biblical associations of that disease. The hospital of Boughton had been built in a good strategical position on the London road, which the inmates patrolled constantly. By the Earl's command they could levy a small toll on all goods coming into Chester by that way—a handful from every sack of wheat and barley, one cheese from every cartful, one salmon from every load. They had their own court of justice and fishing rights in the Dee. It was pronounced by the Church a special Christ-like act to visit and benefit them.

At last in 1218 the good Earl thought his borders

sufficiently at peace for him to take the surcoat with the red cross. He was at the taking of Damietta—pity that so true a Christian soldier should have wasted his valour over so foolish an emprise. He came back only to find the Welsh at their old mischief. He attempted a peaceful solution by marrying his heir, John le Scot, to Llewellyn's daughter, Helen. He cannot have had much insight into Llewellyn's character: the war continued. Nor was the marriage a success in other ways, for (so the story goes) Helen poisoned her husband after he had been Earl for five years.

The latter end of the old Earl Randle was gloomy. He died in 1232. When the news of his death reached Hubert de Burgh (whose life Randle had twice saved from the insane fury of Henry III.), "he sighed deeply, and being then fasting, called for a psalter, and ceased not till he had sung it all over for the health of the soul of the deceased Earl." His body was buried in the Chapter-House of the Abbey.

§ 3.

One day in 1902, bicycling along the coast from Conway to Bangor, we were talking of Spion Kop, and a friend, pointing to the mountains on our left, said: "This is the sort of country they had to fight across." Stevenson has laid it down that one cannot think consecutively and seriously whilst walking; and the same being true of bicycling, my mind, during the silence which followed that grave name Spion Kop, passed on from the thought of what fighting had actually

taken place on these Welsh hills to the fantastic picture of mail-clad mediæval horsemen delivering a frontal attack on a line of Boer entrenchments. In truth, the mistakes of the Boer War were only a repetition of the mistakes of our old Welsh wars—even after seven hundred years we had failed to learn our lesson. The Welsh were to the mailed mediæval knight very much as the Boers to our heavy infantry. When it came to pitched battles, the unarmed Welshman with his sole spear could not make much of a show against the troopers of Hugh Cyveilioc or Randle Blundeville; but pitched battles, though murderous, were very few, and when the mountaineer took to flight Hugh Cyveilioc could not follow him. All he could do was to slaughter his thousand captives and make a mound of their skulls in Boughton. The Welshman soon recovered his morale, and the raidings and snipings went on as before, till the Norman Earls seemed as ridiculous as men sent with blunderbusses to keep order among a swarm of mosquitoes. What made the task of the Earls of Chester specially difficult was the fact that there were no roads in Wales: the lowlands and the valley depths were an impenetrable mass of forest; the army had to hew its way as it went along. The one plan which the Earls might have tried would have been to train light infantry to fight the Welsh according to their own tactics, and then to use this infantry as police, stationing bodies of them in Pulford, Hawarden, Flint, Rhuddlan, etc. This plan, however, is more obvious to us than it could ever have been in days when the feudal military

system prevailed. As it was, the old blundering arrangement continued for more than two hundred years—Earl after Earl, King after King, raising cumbrous armies, crawling with furious menaces perhaps as far as Bangor, slaughtering a few hundred Welsh, and then returning exhausted with unsatiated fury, ineffective, ridiculous—lucky, indeed, if the mountaineers had taken no heavier toll of them than their baggage-train.

Then came Edward Plantagenet.

The perfect flower of English manhood, whose promise was hinted in such as Randle Blundeville, is Edward Plantagenet, Earl of Chester.* And it should be an uplifting thought for men of Chester that, of all our Kings, he was most closely associated with the city and the country round it. But there is no space here to point a moral or adorn our tale. What is to be noticed is that Edward subdued Wales, and that the method which he invented for accomplishing this end, a series of sweeping and enfolding movements, is exactly the method which ended off the Boer War. Edward may have been no great tactician, but he was something of a strategist, and, what was far more important, admirable in discipline and organization. Dr. J. E. Morris has written the history of his Welsh wars, and there you will find how carefully every detail of each campaign was worked out, what pre-

* The line of Earls became extinct with the death of John le Scot in Henry III.'s time. Henry III. made the earldom of Chester an appanage of the Crown, and then handed it over to his son in 1253 (Morris, p. 15).

cautions were taken, above all, to secure the communications of the army (the Boer War turned into nothing else but a war of communications). The army was attended on its march by hundreds of foresters to hew roads, by engineers to fortify the castles, as well as by a large fleet working parallel and bringing up supplies. The main idea was to seize Anglesea, the enemy's granary, and then starve him out without any attempt at pitched battle.

We may imagine how busy a place Chester must have been in those days. It was not, as Dr. J. E. Morris has pointed out, a frontier fortress. It was a base for collecting and rearranging stores and troops. The feudal levies came from all quarters of the compass —and a curious gathering it must have been. The infantry were the rawest of farm-hands, unwilling yokels, some of them with little or no equipment, having, it may be, a bow stave without either arrows or cord, or a bow with no more than a dozen arrows. Some few had leather jerkins, others quilted linen tunics, many quite defenceless. They cannot have been very welcome as guests within the walls. They were treated with immeasurable contempt by the mounted troops—knights on "magni equi" and noblemen on magnificent destriers out of Flanders or France, protected, horse and rider, with chain-mail. Not but that some of the infantry were capable of being formed into a very efficient arm —there were, for instance, the bowmen of Macclesfield, presaging the future renown of Cheshire archers, and in general all those who lived

in the Marches and had gained experience in endless skirmishes with the Welsh. No picture of these armies for the Welsh wars would be complete without a handful of lively Gascons—the most famous mercenaries of their day, whose crossbows were to be of great service in breaking up the squares of Welsh spearmen. In the river, close up by the walls on the south side, is the fleet of Chester ships, together with additions from the Cinque Ports, and even from far Bayonne. Such colour, and movement, and enthusiasm! For the city's ardour had been kindled, and Edward had reason to praise "his men of Chester" for their zeal in service. "They give," he said, "even more than they are asked for."

§ 4.

An empire is like a plant sending its roots far and wide; all the four winds of heaven have breathed upon it, steeping it in rarest fragrances. "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." It is no upstart asserting itself against former growths, but the consummation of all that went before; differently, a new centre or node to which the spiritual forces of the universe momentarily are drawn. The flux and reflux of this cosmic power-tide is the historian's study. On a small scale we may watch it at work in the case of Chester, which draws for its life-principle upon such distant sources—the coasts of the North Sea and the Baltic, Rome, and Northern France, and Greece, and

even farther, from Syria. It was in Syría that our Crusaders learnt the art of castle-building; they learnt it by having themselves to face the triple enceinte of Antioch, and they took the lesson home and improved upon it in Château Gaillard and Carnarvon. Chester Castle, which in our day, as we have suggested, would seem strangely familiar to an ancient Greek, would, in the Middle Ages, have stirred memories of home in the mind of a Syrian exile. In the system of inner and outer wards, defended by curtain walls and towers, each ingeniously arranged to reinforce the others, he would have recognized the skill of the old Byzantine engineer.

The old entrance of the castle, with two huge flanking towers, drawbridge and portcullis, stimulates the imagination much more than the present suave structure. Under the gateway were the dungeons—and in their records what materials for a fine historical romance of the Harrison Ainsworth type! The list of torturers' tools recalls the famous chapters in "Guy Fawkes" and "The Tower of London"· "nine fetterlocks, eleven collars of iron with two great chains of iron, two pairs of iron bolts and shackles, seven pairs of iron manacles, one hammer, one onfell (?), one punch, one pair of tongs." Then there is the case of John, son of Warin le Grovenour. An indictment was brought against him for murder. He had the choice of going through trial by ordeal, or of "putting himself on his country"—*i.e.*, of being tried by jury. He refused the latter, but an attempt was made to persuade him to alter his choice by subjecting him to the "peine

forte et dure." This means that he was stretched out on the ground, had intolerable weights piled upon his body, and for food was given on alternate days "three morsels of the worst bread" and "three draughts of standing water which should be nearest to the prison door." He survived this for three days, and finally was let off—it is interesting to notice on what ground—because the plaintiff made a slight technical mistake in describing the dimensions of the weapon with which he was supposed to have committed the murder!

§ 5.

English pride in the longbow was something almost unique in the history of mediæval warfare. It might almost be compared to our present pride in athletic prowess, and, indeed, you have only to open Ascham's "Toxophilus" to find men discussing the advantages of archery practice in precisely the language which moderns hold when entering on a serious defence of school athletics. Certainly it is a beautiful weapon, the six-foot yew stave, in its simplicity and handiness. For the proper use of it a certain amount of strength, but more skill and experience, were necessary. It was, as Dr. J. E. Morris points out, a question not of gigantic muscles, but of moderate force applied economically. It will be remembered that in Edward I.'s Welsh wars crossbow-men were combined with the Macclesfield archers. But fifty years later the Cheshire men had quite mastered the

art of shooting with the longbow, and its slow, cumbrous predecessor disappeared. English archers won Crécy and Poitiers for us. We boast of that, but forget that those victories also brought disaster on England in the end. For these continued wars bred a class of professional adventurer who, on returning home, and finding no occupation in a peaceful feudal country, became a terrible nuisance. It was the existence of this class, as much as anything else, which led to the civil wars of the fifteenth century. There was no room for such a class under the mediæval system, which only provided for two classes—landholders and shopkeepers. They wandered at large, a dangerous weapon for mischief-makers. Richard II. enrolled many Cheshire archers as his retainers: in token of service they wore his livery of the White Hart and the Rising Sun.

In this way very close relations were established between Richard II. and Chester. But we have to remember that these peculiar relations mark the downfall of a system of government and herald the most miserable era of the city's history. The relations open with the King ordering his Constable of Chester to advance against the oppressive Duke of Gloucester with 5,000 men of Cheshire. The Constable was defeated and slain at Radcote, and Richard II., by way of compensation, sent down 3,000 marks to Chester. A few years later he presented the city with its state sword when he was on his way to Ireland. So it goes on: at one time more archers raised to seize Gloucester; the

earldom made a principality—"because of our love of the people of Chester"; more archers again for service in Ireland—and all these services and favours marking, not the accomplishment of some national or imperial plan, but the first inroads of a disease fatal to King and Constitution. As the body sickened, old wounds broke out again. Here is Owen Glendower, a romantic but baleful figure, raiding and harrying on the border, and defying that evil and unhappy man, Henry of Lancaster. In Chester the loyalty of the citizens to Richard Plantagenet is the first cause of trouble, and by the time Shrewsbury has been fought there will be no lack of heads and quarters rotting above the city gates. Men sewed Richard's badges on to their jerkins and marched stoutly against the castle. No doubt their punishment would have been severe but that attention was diverted from them because the Scotch were massing against the northern border and the "Golden Dragon" was already at work, as pillars of smoke rising behind Moel Fammau plainly showed. Chester soon became once more a frontier town, the outer line of Rhuddlan and Flint being broken through, and Handbridge got its Welsh nickname of "Treboeth"—"the burnt town." There were plenty who would have been ready enough to throw open the city's gates to Owen, and when Henry Percy, lately elected Constable of Chester, came storming southward to join Glendower, he was received with joy in Chester. His return was somewhat grim in idea—one quarter of his body brought by royal messengers to be hung above the East Gate.

Nor did Henry V.'s stronger reign stop this unhealthy ferment in the affairs of Chester. The citizens of Welsh origin were openly disaffected—still the memory of Richard Plantagenet persisted. Brawls and murders prelude the opening of the Wars of the Roses. The life of the city flickered low in those days, for, besides the troubles in its streets, the port was choked now with sand, and its trade was dying.

One incident may be dwelt upon as typical of this whole period. It is the story of Glyn ap Cothi, mentioned by George Borrow in the opening chapters of "Wild Wales." Glyn ap Cothi was a Welsh soldier-poet with an astonishing talent for abuse. He had served in the Earl of Pembroke's army, and shared in the defeat of Mortimer's Cross. Then he came to Chester. He was not without a soft side to his nature; he was vulnerable to widows. He married a widow lady—no doubt her purse was comfortably lined—and proposed to settle down in the city. However, Welshmen in general were in disfavour at that time. It had been all very well so long as there was some ground of agreement between Cestrians and Welsh in opposing the destroyer of Richard Plantagenet. But Henry of Lancaster had been in his grave forty years and more, and the old enmity between Chester and Wales rose again, helped by the continued violence of the Welsh inhabitants of the city. Also, though there had been something to admire and to sympathize with in Owen Glendower, the Golden Dragon, his successors were purely despicable. There was Reinallt ap Griffith ap

Bleddyn, for instance, the terror of Mold—he was no better than a ravening beast. In fine, Glyn ap Cothi did not show himself a man of much penetration. The inhabitants warned him, but when he would not listen, but persisted in his plans of settling down, they without more ado broke into his house, threw all his furniture out of the window, and drove him raving from the city. He betook himself to Reinallt, and called upon him in fiery language to avenge him. We have this song, which he made against the men of Chester :

> "Reinallt ap Gryffydd ap Bleddyn
> Possesses a sword which is sharp upon the skin ;
> For fear of it, while it attacks at once a hundred men,
> The puny city and its inhabitants tremble."

He calls upon water to drown the city and fire to burn it, and invokes this strange curse upon its inhabitants—that hair may grow upon the palms of their hands! He fans the ardour of Reinallt by reminding him of his former deeds—how two hundred men of Chester once set upon him and chased him into a house. While they searched for him he escaped by a secret way, and coming round barred and bolted the doors upon them, set fire to the house, and burnt them alive. Such of the two hundred as had not entered the house he attacked with his sword and drove into the sea. There is a fine generous flavour of improbability in this story which gives us the measure of Glyn ap Cothi's fury.

§ 6.

For nearly two hundred years after the Wars of the Roses the city enjoyed peace, and recovered some measure of her former prosperity, though she was destined never to enjoy such combined military and commercial importance as in the thirteenth century. When the "blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire" flowered again, Royalists and Commons were face to face. The city remained true to its tradition of loyalty, and stood a long and calamitous siege at the hands of Sir William Brereton. Brereton was a citizen of Chester, belonging to an old family which since the Dissolution had occupied the site of St. Mary's Nunnery. In 1642 he went round the town to beat up men for the Parliament. But he found himself in a minority, and soon left the city. The abiding memorial of this unhappy era in the city's history is "King Charles's Tower." To most only the view of it from the walls is known. It should be seen from the canal tow-path in the morning light. It springs clear from the canal level a hundred feet or so, its broad base in the gloom, its summit glowing warmly. At such a time it seems fit to bear tragic memories of royalty laid low.

The city which had been last to surrender to Norman William, and had struck the last blows fought in the cause of Richard Plantagenet, was only brought to yield to the Parliament by stress of famine and utter despair of relief. After Charles had, from the walls,

THE PHŒNIX TOWER ("KING CHARLES'" TOWER)

seen his army beaten at Rowton Moor, he bade the city hold out for ten days ; at the end of that period they might capitulate with their honour saved. That was on September 25, 1645. The date of Brereton's entry should therefore have been October 5. Actually, however, the city held out with splendid endurance to the very end of January, 1646. The line of outworks had been driven in ; there were many breaches in the old wall, which had never been built to withstand anything stronger than mangonel and cat, and the diet of the garrison was reduced to horseflesh and even vermin. Finally, the Royalist armies had been beaten off the field. To have prolonged resistance would have been only suicide. How serious was the condition which drove the citizens into surrender is shown by the awful outbreak of plague in Chester in 1648: "Two thousand persons died of it, and the city became so deserted that grass grew in the streets at the High Cross." Randle Holme estimated the total loss to the city by siege at near £200,000.

§ 7.

I would close these thoughts of Chester's military history in an appropriate place and time, looking from Morgan's Mount towards the Welsh hills at sunset. In the foreground is the Water-Tower. As the Phœnix Tower soaring above its gloomy ravine is a symbol of the city's tragedy in her latter end, so is the Water-Tower of her prosperity and sturdy strength. It was

thrown forward like a protecting wing to cover the shipping, so that here must once have been a scene to be described in that one line of Tennyson:

> "Mast-thronged beneath her shadowy citadel."

But now it is like a despairing arm flung out as if to hold back the receding river—*ripæ ulterioris amore.* Narrow strips of water gleam here and there, but there are unbroken lines of houses between the Water-Tower and the Dee. The magic of this evening can dissolve out the harshness and meanness of these house-rows, and touch to beauty even the canal basin. One's glance sweeps uninterrupted to the Welsh hills beyond, where a symphony of light is working itself out cadence by cadence, with changing rhythm of cloud-shapes furling and unfurling behind the bold, swelling curve of Moel Fammau.

IV

ST. WERBURGH'S

"Domine, dilexi decorem domus tuæ. . . ."

§ 1.

The Abbey Square, surrounded once by the bake-house, brewhouse, and limekiln of St. Werburgh's monastery, but now by house-blocks of the Georgian type, is an unfortunate incident in the surroundings of the cathedral. The architecture seems to proclaim all the least pleasant ideas associated with the description "Cathedral City." The hard rectangularity of the red-brick fronts, with their gloomy windows and facings of painted stonework, makes the place solemn, yet dull and unimpressive. The central grass-plot, with its clump of evergreens and high iron railings, sounds its note in the cheerless accord. There is silence—moss grows here and there between the cobble-stones—but the silence is asphyxiating. Now, were the cathedral of rosy marble, with golden domes, colonnades of alabaster, and porches iridescent with mosaic, one might soon forget the Abbey Square. But it is of the red sandstone that grows sombre in age; and so, even after leaving the square and passing into

the cloisters, one's laden soul finds no relief, remaining long blind to their ruinous, pathetic dignity.

The better approach is from the south side, where half-timbered houses in St. Werburgh's Street, by their brightness and airiness, afford just the necessary contrast to the church, heaved up on toiling buttresses, parapet above parapet, dark and massive against the moving sky.

Chester Cathedral has been "vigorously" restored by Sir Gilbert Scott, so that nearly all the southern façade wears a modern appearance. But the north side has been left more as it was, carved by weather out of all likeness to the work of men's hands. Before many decades pass frost and rain will have washed out all Sir Gilbert Scott's new, fine-wrought detail, just as the tide licks away a drawing on the sands. His big crocketed finials and turrets will stand up as naked as obelisks; for Chester stone is as hard as new cheese, and much more friable. It is good stuff to make ruins of. It drinks up water like a sponge; then comes frost, and the fragments fly in showers. After a frosty night the cloister* walls are strewn with such fragments. And even when the sandstone is new it cannot be applied to the same uses as limestone or granite. The texture is too loose, so that in the first place it is practically impossible to obtain a clean outline; and in the second place, even when chisel and emery have done their best, the surface of the stone breaks up the light and spoils your contrast of

* The cloisters have now been restored and the windows filled with glass by the present Dean Bennett.

THE ABBEY GATEWAY

shadow. The colour, too, must be taken into consideration : a building that might look well in limestone might look hideous in sandstone. Big-featured architecture makes the best effect. The choir is by so much the most attractive part because the simple, deep-cut Early English mouldings on arches and piers suit this medium.* Contrariwise, features in the Decorated style—for instance, the sedilia in the choir—are about as effective as an etching on blotting-paper. An exception, however, must be made in favour of two things : Firstly, the geometrical tracery of the windows in the southern aisles succeeds because the outlines are hardened by being silhouetted against the daylight ; secondly, the texture of the stone, just on account of its softness, is suitable for the representation on a moderately large scale of human features. On the whole, however, it may be said that no one has evolved a style which shall turn to account the peculiarities of the local stone in the same way as, for instance, the village architecture in the Cotswolds turns to account the peculiarities of oolite limestone. Of all known styles, certain types of Norman approximate to this ideal for Chester.

The monks drew the stone for their church from their own lands—it was not a period of contractors.

* And yet, though difficult, it is not impossible to execute delicate, refined work in Chester stone. Consider the vestibule to the Chapter-House, a harmonious adjustment of medium and design, where the ribs of the vaulting spring straight from the ground, first in gathered clusters, then spreading fountain-wise, as light as jets of spray, in perfectly satisfying curves, uninterrupted by capitals.

In the eleventh century each church was, so to speak, home-made: the stone was of the district (unless it could be conveniently borne by water from Caen or some other celebrated quarry), neighbouring forests supplied the necessary timbers, and the workmen were to a large extent natives trained on the actual building itself. There would, of course, be experts to supervise. In the case of Chester, Anselm may have sent over workmen from his abbey of Bec, in Normandy. But these had to depend for assistance upon indigenous talent. It is a commonplace of art history that only in rare instances have the names of these mediæval craftsmen been handed down to us. On this commonplace, indeed, Ruskin and Morris and their disciples have built a new heaven and a new earth. From their writings one gathers a pleasing picture of such an incident as the erection of a big monastic church. Here is a community of men—stonemasons, carpenters, workmen in all metals, precious and base, painters, and glaziers—united with one object—the creation of a work of art. They work with pious fervour, without pride, for the sake of no gain to themselves. It is as though they were translating their prayers into stone. Their church will be, then, something more than a collection of shapes and colours pleasing the eye—it will be the concrete image of the life and ideals of a community. The seed of this art-work is sown in their souls. But not only will the building be representative of the community as a whole: each individual of the community will have stamped his own in-

dividuality upon the work, for the craftsman is free, within limits, to be his own designer. In other words, this community of artists is not a monarchy wherein each man is a slave obeying the judgment of one man, but a democracy in which the individual works out the pattern of his own life.

Keeping all this in mind, and assuming its truth, one can deduct objections to Sir Gilbert Scott's work at Chester—to his restoration of the pyramidal roof of the south choir aisle, for instance, his addition of parapet and pinnacles to the choir, his removal of the stone choir-screen, his paving in the choir, and so forth. For it will be said that the artistic temper of our own day is not that of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, faintly sketched in above. The age of democratic art is over. Our stonemasons are no longer free, but only machines for executing the chief architect's designs (even the title "architect" is ominous). Buildings of to-day are no longer the expression of the spirit of a community—something, as it were, organic, as folk-song. To build in the Gothic style to-day is to produce something manufactured, artificial, almost theatrical; and to "restore" a cathedral is to dig up and galvanize a corpse.

§ 2

Three things in the cathedral and its vicinity do not receive much attention, and yet are eloquent—the abbey gateway, the music-hall, and the south transept door. The abbey gateway leads into what is now

called Abbey Square. It is of the twelfth century. The huge archway of it is like a bent brow; and the whole building, massive and repellent, suggests the entrance of a military, not a spiritual stronghold. The music-hall was once the chapel of St. Nicholas, and one asks why the ruins were thus desecrated. The old doorway of the south transept of the cathedral formerly gave you the answer. That doorway was crammed in under the window-sill of the western aisle; it seemed to be shouldering its way into the transept. In its unrestored condition (previous to 1908) its lintel cut right into the window, blocking up nearly one-half of the same with its rough masonry. This is its story: In the fourteenth century the monks wished to enlarge their south transept, but the small, mean church of St. Oswald's, lying just to the south, blocked their way. Therefore they pulled it down, and, by way of compensating the parishioners, they set up, a little to the south-west, St. Nicholas's Chapel. Where St. Oswald's had been they built their great south transept. But the parishioners of St. Oswald's would make no sacrifice in the cause of art. They objected to the loss of their old church, and they sniffed at St. Nicholas; they claimed the right to use the new south transept as their parish church. After a long struggle they won. In 1488 the monks knocked a doorway through the fair tracery of the window in the western aisle. The doorway, as it originally was built, was a perfect expression in stone of bad temper and contempt. Yet it served for four hundred years and more. St. Nicholas,

desecrated, was lent to Mayor and Corporation, who made of it a Common Hall. After the "New Exchange" had been built in Northgate Street, St. Nicholas's Chapel became a theatre. In its last state it is swept and garnished—a music-hall, decorated by the seven devils of provincial ugliness.

St. Werburgh's, then, was exclusive—so much the gateway suggests. It had a passion for creating beautiful things, and was not easily balked in gratifying this passion; that we understand by the history of the south transept. In fact, the abbey was a kind of cultured aristocracy. That position had, in a manner of speaking, been inevitable; it was the logical outcome of the monkish habit of denying the world, the flesh, and the devil.

§ 3.

What is a monk? A person who obeys. St. Benedict conceives a "regula"—that is to say, a scheme of life providing rules for the minutest details of labour and worship. This regula the monk obeys, hoping to become good by destroying his individuality. Incidentally the regula could not be practised in the ordinary workaday world. Therefore St. Benedict shuts off the world by a high wall, a frowning gate. Behind these the monks obey his rule.

But it requires money to build a gateway and a church, a cloister, a fratry, a dorter, and to feed and clothe the monks. Therefore Hugh Lupus, when he founds the monastery, grants lands here and a mill there, tithes of

corn, chickens, calves, pigs, lands, butter, cheese, all profits of the fair at St. Werburgh's Feast. And his descendants urge further gifts to be expended on praising God with beautiful things, with a golden chalice (which signifies "the treasures of wisdom that lie hid in Christ"), with stained-glass windows (these represent "the Holy Scriptures which expel all things hurtful, but transmit the light of the True Sun, that is God, into the hearts of the Faithful"), with carved stalls ("for in Heaven is everlasting rest"). In each art-work the mystic strove to see a symbol of things spiritual, striving to be blind to his pleasure in forms and colours of material things, in architecture, in sculpture, in painting, in music.

The monk, then, had turned artist. And he was already a landowner, wielding big power for evil or good in the countryside according as he treated his tenants well or ill. The Abbot of St. Werburgh had to defend himself against greedy neighbours, such as Philip Burnel of Christleton, who coveted Saighton, Huntington, Cheaveley, and Boughton, possessions of the abbey. Or it is Sir Baldwin of Radington who comes with armed men, with sword and shield, and bow and arrow, swarms over the abbey walls and broaches three casks of "vini vascoign" (of Gascony wine), and for four whole days makes havoc with the "capons and pullets, herbs and utensils and victuals," of the abbey. The hue and cry is raised in the city, and the great bell (*communis campana* in the Pentice) is rung; the mayor and the citizens make a stand against Sir Baldwin,

but he drives them off, and departs not from the terrified city save at his leisure and unharmed. What does this mean if not that the Abbot of Chester, outside the cloister, behaved and was treated like any temporal peer? If we wish to understand the manner of life of such men, we find it set forth in the "Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond," which records many incidents in the life of Samson, Prior, in the latter part of the twelfth century, of St. Edmund's, at Bury. Samson is an ideal, a glass of perfection, for English landowners, and one can imagine that two at least of the Abbots of St. Werburgh closely resembled him—Simon de Albo Monasterio and Simon Ripley. Such men had indeed renounced the flesh and its vanities, but still they had not thrown away either their common sense or their manliness. Their manliness they kept for the likes of Sir Baldwin (the actual Baldwin incident was in the time of Henry de Sutton, a man of poor mettle). Their common sense was shown in the administration of their office. Uppermost on the stream of consciousness in such a man as Simon de Albo Monasterio was a sturdy resolve to assert their rights against all comers; this is reputed British. Not but what there were silent undercurrents of thought. For instance, Simon's actions depended on his knowledge of this, that in managing St. Werburgh's estates wisely * he was not

* William Langland and Wycliffe strongly condemned such men as this: "They semen better Baylifs or Reves than ghostlie Prests of Jesus Christ" ("Two Treatises Against Friars," quoted in Skeat's "Piers Plowman").

working for his individual advantage, but for a community. True, he was disposer and ruler, but not for himself. He was a monk ; he obeyed the regula of St. Benedict, and each of his acts was no more than an interpretation of the regula, an application of the system to a given set of circumstances. For instance, the resources of the monastery were husbanded in order that out of them great sacrifices might be made to the glory of God. Therefore he rebuilt the abbey church on a more splendid scale, giving us the choir as far as the clerestory, together with the Lady Chapel, part of the nave and south transept, and the Chapter-House.

He was a friend of Edward I., whom he probably entertained more than once ; specially, let us suppose, when the King returned from his triumphs in Wales in May of 1283. The house was well able to entertain a royal guest. Within the abbey walls was a self-supporting community, possessing its own bakehouse and brewhouse and limekiln. Moreover, the Abbot had his own mills, one at the Bache and one on the Dee, and provisions came from his own estates. There was a huge staff of paid servants, including half a dozen cooks, a caterer, a salter (whose chief duty was to mix mustard), and a small army of carriers. The refectory was then worthier the royal presence than to-day. The present northern entry into the cloisters, cut through by Dean Cotton, has shorn off two whole bays. The eastern window has been walled up and the walls whitewashed. But then the light of spring skies, pulsating through stained glass,

ST. WERBURGH'S SHRINE

quickened the figures in frescoes and tapestry. Here were tables set out with mountains of food. The cook of St. Werburgh's, it must be mentioned, was a man of substance. Hearken to the list of his perquisites: "Tails of salmon and bass, the heads and tails of milvell, conger and ray, two pieces of each chine of beef and pork slaughtered in the abbey, two gallons of beer a day, and all the dripping, etc."* He has furnished forth mustard and brawn, potage, stewed pheasants, cygnets, peacocks and heron-shaws, sucking-rabbits, baked meats of every kind, baked quinces, almond-cream, sage fritters; and each course is finished off with a huge "device"—a set-piece manufactured out of jelly, sugar, pastry, paper, etc., and representing such subjects as "An angel appearing to the three shepherds on a hill," or "Gabriel greeting Mary." Each device has its appropriate Latin inscription. Legions of serving-men are hurrying in and out of the hall and kitchen, marshalled by the server. The butler is in charge of the wines—red Gascony or white rupell brought over in Chester ships, muscadelle, malvoisie, vernage, and at dessert ypocras (which is compounded of red wine, sugar and spices, and served with wafers). The butler also serves the bread—made of flour grown on abbey lands, ground in the abbey mill at the Bache, and baked in the abbey bakehouse—cocket, simnel, and trait.

Dogs fighting for bones among the sweet rushes newly strewn on the floor trip up the anxious serving-

* Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

men. At the lower tables, farthest away from the royalty, the guests are egging on two dogs to fight. At the daïs itself the greatest guests are seated, among them the most famous Cestrian of his day—Richard the Engineer, in his cloak of vermilion, in some part builder of the castles of Rhuddlan and Flint (padlocks wherewith Edward secures his new conquest), designer of some part of the abbey church itself, and tenant of the Earl's own mills on the Dee, which is tantamount to being a millionaire. Edward himself sits by the side of his fair queen, conversing graciously enough with Abbot Simon. Edward probably likes Simon because he does not obtrude the fact that he is a monk, just as someone liked Browning "because he isn't like a damned literary man." Their first meeting, indeed, had been stormy, for Simon de Albo Monasterio had been of Simon de Montfort's appointment, and Edward, after defeating Simon de Montfort, had been inclined to thrust the Abbot out. But Simon the Abbot came to interview the King at Beeston Castle, and appeased him. Knowing what Edward was, we may be sure that it was by honesty and fearlessness that Simon prevailed, not by canting, oily hypocrisy. The royal favour is to be manifested not only in conversation. Already Queen Eleanor has, with her own hands, presented a cloth of gold; the King has confirmed the charters of the abbey. Next year Simon will be allowed to hunt and take six harts and six hinds in Delamere Forest, and, further, to pierce the city walls in order to convey water in leaden pipes from Christleton to the cistern in the "preese."

This water-supply is the gift of an old enemy—Philip de Burnel. In fact, under Simon the monastery of St. Werburgh touches the summit of its fortunes.

§ 4.

Much of the glory of the house has been taken away. No stained glass of the old time beautifies the windows ; the illuminated missals, the vestments and chalices and reliquaries, have been stolen, the frescoes washed away. And in the case of such beautiful things as yet remain—the masonry of the choir, the woodwork of the stalls—we know nothing—not so much as the names of those who created them. Yet there is one exception : one work is left—a poem, "The Legend of St. Werburgh," whose author's name at least we know. Henry Bradshaw's "Legend of St. Werburgh" is like some last constellation fainting in a sky where already the dawn of the Renaissance has kindled its gorgeous fires. It is earnest, ingenuous, and sweet ; it reveals the author himself, his body chastened, and the soul's candour shining through. No trace is found of that tainted asceticism of the Thebaid which found a horrible fascination in the decay and putrescence of the macerated flesh. His flesh is not corrupted, but etherealized :

> "As clene as cristall, he bare these virtues thre :
> Chastite, obidience, and wylfull poverte."

Yet neither does one picture him as a great saint. His may have been the history of many souls of

poetic temper who found no repose in the secular world of the fifteenth century. At first he may have heard no genuine summons of the Spirit urging him to the cloister. A normal youth of refined and sensitive disposition inclining him towards an artistic career, certain perfectly beautiful sounds and sights and savours may have thrilled him and stirred in him the desire for life in unstinted draughts of pleasure or pain. In dreams the world may have seemed a garden all on fire with blooms of passion, distilling fragrant essences, in which he would fain steep the very fibre of his soul. Waking, he found it all confect of disharmonies : on the one side, no refined cult of sensuous beauty, but only the animalism of passion, grossness, lust, and violence ; on the other hand, no sweetness and light, but abstract intellectualism and bloodless mysticism, the formal logic of schoolmen, the etiolate art of the monastery. Yet, if the cloister seemed cold, it gave shelter to dreamers. Remember, also, that the distinction between art and religion would not present itself clearly to men accustomed to associate all culture with the monastery and the church. Education and disposition would turn Bradshaw to the monkish life, and in process of time the cloister cooled his romantic vein. In place of the riot of purple and golden blossoms he had dreamed of, virginal lilies sprang up in his heart. A poet who might have wished to write, "The fountains mingle with the river . . .," wrote the legend of a Mercian saint.

It cannot be claimed that Bradshaw had the gift of

characterization. He does not make his saint a live person for us. But then the very idea that he, a sinner, could breathe the life-spirit into the memory of the saint who through years had been his guiding-star would have seemed to him blasphemous—as blasphemous as the attempt, in reading the Scriptures, to put life and an air of actuality to the recorded utterances of Christ. For the same reason that prayers and the Bible are recited in a monotone, Bradshaw paints his St. Werburgh a rigid, lifeless figure. That is not the whole reason, indeed, but only part of it. Another and more important part is the fact that he wished to present to us, not the human side of his saint—the accidental, corruptible part—but the incorruptible soul—the purity, the Divine power over things of this world. He would have said, like the critics of Fra Lippo Lippi, that his business

> ". . . is not to catch men with show,
> With homage to the perishable clay,
> But lift them over it, ignore it all,
> Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.
> * * * * *
> Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms."

Such a temper of mind neglects the obvious truth that naked soul cannot be apprehended, but only soul as expressed in the concrete—soul speaking to us in the lines of a man's countenance, the nobility of his brow, the light in his eyes. The flesh is not a barrier between our understanding and the man's soul. But Bradshaw, like all religious artists of his day, assumed

that it must be so, and hastened to break down this barrier in his hasty zeal to get at the soul. It is really as if, in his zeal to make us appreciate the essential sweetness of the rose, a man should first with trembling fingers strip it of all its petals, saying that these are perishable, while beauty and sweetness are eternal.

Nevertheless, here and there the wayward human element creeps in and cheats his grim theories. There is a touch of humour, manifest in the incident of St. Werburgh and the geese.

Wild geese had been committing depredations upon certain farm-lands at Weedon belonging to St. Audrey's convent, devouring the corn and all other seedlings. The people of the district sent in complaints to St. Werburgh, who thereupon ordered her steward to go to Weedon and bring back the geese to Ely, "there to be pynned and punysshed for their trespace." The steward protested that such a thing was not possible, but St. Werburgh would not listen to him, and he reluctantly departed on his errand. "My lady commandes you byrdes everychone," said he to the geese, "afore me to go unto her proper mansyone." The geese obeyed at once, and all set out to Ely :

> "Unto her presence he brought the gauntes all,
> Dredefully darynge comen now they be,
> Theyr wynges traylynge entred into the hall,
> For great confusyon after theyr kynde and propryte,
> Mournynge in theyr maner, abydynge one and all
> Her wyll and Judgment with mercy specyall ;
> Lamentynge all nyght there in captyvyte
> Tyll the morowe after withouten lyberte."

Next morning they with one accord, "with hye voyces . . . on her dyd call," and she, taking pity upon them, set them free, and warned them not to repeat their offence. They gladly departed, but on their way discovered that one of their number was missing; at once they flew back again, and expostulated with the saint that they had been treated unfairly. She, making inquiries, discovered that a servant of the monastery had stolen, cooked, and devoured one of the geese on the previous night. Only the clean-picked bones could be produced. But so tragic an ending of the story would have been intolerable; consequently we read that, "by vertue of her benedyccyon, the byrde was restaured and flewe away full soone."

The story was illustrated also, though it is possible that the illustrations are older by a century than Bradshaw's work. On one of the misereres of the stalls on the north side of the choir you will find carvings which represent three situations in the story. On the left-hand side you see the "gaunts" penned up. They are stretching their necks full-length after the manner of their kind, and no doubt airing their views of the situation with unnecessary circumlocution and emphasis, also after the manner of their kind. On the right the wicked servant is on his knees confessing his offence to St. Werburgh. In the centre is the dénouement—St. Werburgh gives her "benedyccyon." The bird, restored whole, is just rising from the meat-dish, which the wicked servant is holding. The admirable feature in this central piece is the manner in which the

"gaunts" flying overhead, though represented with naturalistic accuracy, complete the decorative scheme.

This seems a suitable place for a brief account of the legend of St. Werburgh. Bradshaw's work is a metrical translation of Latin originals, such as Goscelinus, William of Malmesbury, and Giraldus Cambrensis. He has added episodes and quickening descriptive touches. It is interesting to notice that in his prologue he gives the impression that he does not look on his legend as a work of art, but as an act of grace designed to bring valuable ideas within the grasp of the "comyn vulgares." None the less, and despite himself, by reason of "termes exquised and sence retoriall," and his verse, "Fragrant and facunde of englisshe exquisite," and his naïve humour and candid soul, most of it is poetry.

But to return to St. Werburgh. She was the daughter of a Mercian King, Wulfere, and lived in the seventh century. She grew up in the exercise of every virtue, and, being wooed by many Princes, rejected all, declaring that she had chosen Christ for her spouse. Soon she obtained, though with difficulty, her father's permission to take nun's vows at the Abbey of Ely. She was made ruler over all the nunneries in Mercia by King Ethelred, and in 708 was consecrated Abbess, residing mostly at her own foundation of Weedon. At her own desire she was buried in Hanbury, but when the Danes invaded England her remains were moved to Chester for the sake of safety. Such is the bare outline of her story, which is filled out with

the record of countless miracles and acts of grace, catalogues of her virtues, and elaborate descriptions of particular events, particularly of the great feast made by Wulfere to celebrate the spiritual marriage of St. Werburgh with Christ:

> "All herbes and floures, fragraunte, fayre and swete,
> Were strawed in halles and layd under theyr fete;
> Cothes of gold and arras were hanged in the hall,
> Depaynted with pyctures and hystoryes manyfolde,
> Well wrought and craftely with precious stones all
> Glyterynge as Phebus, and the beten golde
> Lyke an erthly paradyse pleasaunt to beholde."

§ 5.

Possibly we may still see the spot where the legend of St. Werburgh was written in the cloisters. Cloister is a word used as synonymous with monastic life, because it was where all the business of the monastery, except worshipping, feeding, or sleeping, was carried on. Here, for instance, the monks read and studied. In the west and south walks there is a curious architectural feature. An inner row of columns has been built up at a distance of some 3 feet from the outer wall. Between these columns and the outer wall were arranged the monks' "carrels," or reading-places, separated presumably by wooden partitions. Each carrel contained a bench and a reading-desk, and altogether (according to Archdeacon Barber's calculations) there would have been accommodation for twenty monks to read at once. In the cloisters at Gloucester the carrels, having been made of stone, remain perfect.

In such a carrel Bradshaw would sit reading or composing after the midday meal. He would emerge occasionally, and with a reverence demand of the brother in charge some necessary book or manuscript from the cupboards (*armaria*), which were disposed so as to fit into the round arched recesses of Norman work in the south walk. There were drawbacks to working in the cloister. Round the corner in the north walk the novice-master is instructing his half-dozen charges to sing or to read. Every now and then the sound of a lusty buffet rings through the vaulted corridor when novice John sings flat, or novice Robert construes "triste lupus stabulo"—"the sad wolf is in the stable." They are a noisy lot, those novices. When they are not working at their lessons with the novice-master they are playing at "nine-holes," which involves a great deal of laughter and scuffling, so that at short intervals the senior brothers slip silently and hastily out of their carrels and round the corner to cuff heads and enjoin seemly silence, returning with bowed heads and joined hands. And though it is pleasant enough in July or August to sit by the window that looks on to the grassy "preese," and hear the birds sing, and watch the shadows shift and veer from buttress to buttress opposite, it is another tale in February. For though the cloister windows are glazed, draughts come sweeping round the long walks; though you are clothed in a thick monkish gown, with trimmings of cat-fur, your finger-tips grow numb, and the tiles, beautiful as fallen constellations,

are uncommonly chilly underfoot. At such times the monks must have felt as Frère Jean felt :

> "Monachus in claustro
> Non valet ova duo."

St. Werburgh's shrine in its present condition is one of the most successful pieces of restoration in the cathedral, for the reason that it is no restoration at all. The place of destroyed parts is supplied by substitutes of uncarved stone, which merely serve to keep the surviving features in their correct relative positions. It would have been quite possible for someone to "restore" the destroyed parts, reconstructing them by means of compass, protractor, and T-square. Whosoever can answer the question, "Why would such a restoration destroy the whole?" has a basis on which to construct the first adequate theory of art that the world will have possessed. Differences between the original and the restoration, so far as outline is concerned, might be almost imperceptible to the eye. It seems to be the spirit in which the thing is done that matters, and yet that spirit finds no material expression in the thing it creates, since a man working in an entirely different spirit may produce a perfect imitation. On the other hand, if it is not the spirit that matters, if the original and the substitute have an equal artistic value, then art becomes merely a matter of shapes and colours, and you lapse into the spiritual dry-rot of the Whistlerian æsthetic.

Perhaps it is a special virtue of this cathedral that, chiefly by its imperfections, it does stimulate one to

thought. It contains, for instance, more than one architectural blunder. There is the clumsy stilt of the eastern half of the last arch at the east end of the choir (north side); there are extraordinary mistakes in the handling of the stone vaults at the east end of each of the nave aisles—most curious on the north side, where you get an abortive springer sprouting out of the last bit of vaulting. Again, there is a magnificent disregard of symmetry in the manner in which the present cloister has been superimposed on the earlier structures, especially at the south-west corner, where the vaulting is carried on a shaft that effectually blocks entrance to the Abbot's chamber. And yet none of these imperfections stands condemned on any but utilitarian grounds.

But we have wandered from Bradshaw and the shrine of St. Werburgh. The shrine at first glance seems to disprove by its beauty the statement that the Decorated style can never be a success applied to local stone. Still, all the beauty lies, not in the worn detail of crocket and finial, but in the proportion of parts and flow of outlines combining to produce an air of almost frail delicacy. In its completeness, with its carved images of Mercian Kings and Queens, when it was studded with jewels and hung with gold and silk embroideries glowing in soft lamp-light—even the pallid page of Bradshaw is tinged with faint colour at the thought of it:

> "O rutilant gemme, clerer than the cristall,
> O redolent rose, repleit with suavite.

* * * *

O floure of virgins, and comly creature,
Syngyng with angels in the hevenly toure,
Transcendyng the saphir and diamounde pure
In worship, praisyng, beaute and decur.
* * * *
Glorious abbasse and floure of chastite,
Carboncle shenyng bothe day and nyght.
* * * *
O gemme of holynes and noble president."

§ 6.

Bradshaw's work may be regarded as part of the revival of St. Werburgh's under Simon Ripley, for though the poem was not completed till 1513, just before the author's death, it must, in ways we can hardly now discern, reflect the new impulse of life originating from that Abbot who was installed when Bradshaw was monk. The description of Wulfere's banquet, from which a quotation was given, is, no doubt, a description of something which Bradshaw himself had seen ; its pomp and circumstance signify the restoration of fortunes afflicted by a succession of weak, unscrupulous superiors. Simon Ripley completed the south transept and the nave by adding a clerestory, and he was a careful administrator of estates : in his time there are no indictments registered against the monks for violence or theft. That is all we know of him ; but experience of human nature teaches that only a strong man succeeds in such works as these after a century of misrule.

It must be acknowledged that no more were all monks like Henry Bradshaw than all Abbots like

Simon Ripley, or that other greater Simon of two centuries back. The monastery, like the city outside, is seen at its worst in the period from the death of Edward III. to the accession of Henry VII. When full discount has been allowed for prejudice against the Roman Church, English hatred of priestcraft, perspective distorted across long centuries, still the picture offered of the house in this period is ugly enough. To begin with, though St. Werburgh's has been represented as a stronghold of culture, yet a certain proportion of the monks were illiterate. Some of them were no worse than the holy hermit of Copmanhurst; some, indeed, though ignorant, may have been sincerely pious, like the dear nuns of St. Mary's in this same city, who did not know what their own Latin hymns meant. But there were some monks who were not only illiterate, but immoral. Such was Thomas de Eardesley, who "broke into Abbot Henry de Sutton's chamber, forced his chests, and took away twenty marks and three gold rings, as well as a chest and five marks belonging to Robert de Legh."* He committed other robberies, and plotted to murder the Abbot. Such, again, were Richard Coghull and Thomas le Chamberleyn, who roamed the dark streets with other blackguards to insult and rob decent citizens. Such were Hugh of Stockport, who insulted and stabbed Thomas Kendal, and Christopher Walley and Richard Hamnet, who

* Morris, "Chester during the Plantagenet and Tudor Periods," chapter iii., where also are recorded the other misdoings of monks mentioned above.

broke into Will Ransom's house and committed a rape on his servant. In the streets there were pitched battles between the monks of St. Werburgh and other no more respectable secular religious—the Black Friars and the White Friars. To have been a drunken brawler, haunting grimy thieves' kitchens and gambling hells, himself a thief and murderer, was no disqualification to prevent any given monk from being elected Abbot. Thus, Thomas de Eardesley, mentioned above, was Abbot 1413-1435, and his successor in office was John de Salghall, who, when a monk under him, had robbed him of money and plate, and, having been made Abbot, was excommunicated in 1450.

§ 7.

It may be unsafe to assert roundly that British character is incapable of adapting itself to monastic life, but there is certainly something which is met with more commonly among us Northern nations than elsewhere, and is opposite to the spirit of the cloister. This something is the Rabelaisian spirit of Frère Jean; we have quoted this much:

> "Monachus in claustro
> Non valet ova duo."

And the remaining couplet is equally significant:

> "Sed quando est extra
> Bene valet triginta."

The phrase "Gargantuan laughter," like German music, ought to go to sleep for a century. Un-

fortunately, it is the only phrase that expresses the characteristic here referred to. Gargantuanism is a healthy exuberance, a joyous buffoonery, an entire yielding up of oneself to one thing which the morose abbey gateway was built to exclude, the joy of being alive, which on a sunny day, for instance, leads men to play the fool out of sheer happiness. Now, you cannot imagine a genuine monk playing the fool. This mood in art produces the grotesque, the gargoyles that form corbels to take the bottom of the choir vaulting-shafts, and, in greater perfection, the carved misereres of the stalls. And if in imagination anyone can put side by side these carvings and the pulpit in the refectory, he will get the first word and the last word in the history of the monastery of St. Werburgh.

First for the stalls: consider how the shadowy legion of shafts and pinnacles stands up rank behind rank, aspiring to the very summit of the great choir arches. They seem not to be thrust up by stress of tough material, but to hover, winged. Seen from the gallery under the east window, they are like an innumerable forest of delicately patterned algæ floating motionless midway down the sea of spent lights and netted shadows. Approaching nearer, you are dazed by the complexity of them. There is such wide variety of detail, and each of the thousand members in the structure is carved with such delicate finish, like a Chinese ivory. The dark generous tone of the oak is itself a delight to the eye. The artists have perfectly recognized the possibilities and the limits of this

material: they have not produced something which seems a mimicry of stone, or as though it had been snipped out of cardboard. They understood how to combine mass with an effect of lightness, and they cut deep for the sake of shadows, never neglecting the manner in which the surfaces catch and reflect the light. You strive vainly to reckon the enthusiasm, the patience, the artistry, that united to produce this admirable spacing-out of the design, this minute realism of carved fruit and flower. The whole takes your breath away.

Yet, to be breathless is an uncomfortable state, of which one soon tires. In other words, all these bewildering riches after a time cloy. It is the old story. Ingenuity of detail may for a time occupy the mind with pleasure, but it cannot ever replace just the Divine touch that lies at the centre of every greatest art-work. One player leaves you gasping with his performance of a difficult cadenza. It is mere finger-gymnastics. Another carries you straight into heaven by playing a simple melody in slow time on the G string. There is that sort of high simplicity about a great deal of the thirteenth-century work in St. Werburgh's, but especially the pulpit* in the refectory. It is the

* Only one such other lectern exists in England: it is in the refectory of Beaulieu Priory. The Beaulieu lectern is of richer workmanship—the mouldings are more varied and numerous, and the shafts are of Purbeck marble. On the other hand, the Chester lectern is of more beautiful proportions, and forms one harmonious whole.

most striking as well as the most beautiful thing in the refectory. Doubtless it was made so to signify that spiritual food was to be thought more important than bodily food. This was the use of it: grace having been recited, the reader climbed the stairs up to the pulpit, and, at a sign from the Abbot, began to read some passage from the Bible or other sacred writing. After a few verses the Abbot gave a second signal, and the first course of the meal was served. The reading continued throughout the meal. The beauty of the lectern is direct in appeal; it cannot be "explained" any more than the beauty of folk-song. At most you can isolate particular features, as, for instance, the inclusion of it all within a single bay of the wall—the quatrefoils pierced in the stone between the heads of the arches (these have the effect of lightening the mass of wall above the staircase, which otherwise might have given the impression of crushing the delicate Early English shafting)—the corbelling out of the pulpit itself providing a suitable weighty climax to the ascendant line of stair-arches, poising like a blossom on the end of its stem. But the essential beauty eludes all these attempts to seize it; it is a matter of distribution, of lights and shades, of angles and curves, of proportion between plain and decorated surfaces. There is not an unnecessary detail; there is not a stroke of the chisel of which you can say, "This was done for effect." It is characteristic of its own age, the climax of the mediæval period, an age before "Holy Church" had mated with "Proud Peronelle," corrupted by temporal power.

It was an age when religion, for one tense moment, seemed to have mastered all worldly motions of the mind, and, passing them through the furnace of the spirit, purging out the corruptible dross, to have transfused them into a passionate mysticism. It was the age when love for a mother was transformed into love for the Virgin Mary. They sang .

> "Your weeping, mother, greveth me sore;
> But I wolde die, ye wern forlore.
> Do way, mother, and wepe no more,
> Your lulling lesseth my languor."*

The love-songs imported from Anjou were remoulded into "One Good Orison of our Lady," "The Wooing of Our Lord": "Christ's† mild mother, Saint Mary, my life's light and my sweet lady, to thee I bow and bend the knee, and all my heart's blood offer thee—Thou art my soul's light and my heart's bliss, my life, my hope, my health, I wis: I owe thee worship with all my might, and love-songs for thee day and night. . . ."

To quite a different age do the stalls belong, when the mediæval system was in stormy dissolution. Return from the refectory to the nave and take up a position whence you can see the second window of the clerestory (north side, counting from the crossing). Through a pair of binoculars you will discern a curious carving which represents a man, all huddled together, bound hand and foot. Bishop Browne gave this quaint in-

* Sidgwick and Chambers, *Mediæval Lyrics*, No. lxxvii.

† "On god ureisun of Ure Lefdi."

terpretation of it: "First it is necessary to remember that the choir-screen is not in its original position: originally the choir included the easternmost bay of the nave. Thus the window with the crouching figure would be next to the choir itself. Now, the devil was always consumed with a desire to witness the celebration of the Eucharist. He could not watch it through the choir windows, each of which was guarded by an angel. But the nave windows were unguarded. Coming from the north (the devil's quarter), he would walk straight for the easternmost window of the nave, in hope that by screwing his head close against the glass he might see into the choir, over the choir-screen. Imagine him peering in: he starts back suddenly; the first object to meet his gaze is this figure huddled up and bound hand and foot. He flies off in terror, recognizing the penalty that awaits him if he should profane the mysteries with his gaze."*

And yet, growing familiar in the lapse of years with this quaint threat, he began to despise it. And at length, greatly daring, he wriggled through the window and won a way into the choir itself.

Enter the choir and ask the verger to show you the carved work on the misereres—that is, the underneath of the seats in the stalls. There is not room in this chapter for a list of the subjects of the carvings. But these subjects are of the type which the French would call *propos forains*—country fair subjects

* Archdeacon Barber in *The Chester and North Wales Archæological Society's Journal.*

inclining towards grossness, but certainly proceeding from an exuberant jollity of mind, an intense interest in the vulgarest manifestations of life as something possessing an intrinsic value. Now, what is the explanation of this from the point of view of the founders of monasticism? Remember that the devil against whom the monks waged fiercest war was the lord of the corruptible sensual world. And yet here on the stall seats you find a very lively reminder of the delights of the flesh. What can this mean but that the devil had flouted the crouching figure in the nave window and slipped into the central stronghold of the church? I cannot understand how the monks would attempt to explain away these sculptures. Possibly they attached a symbolism to the position of the carvings, meant to express that thus should monks thrust down and hold under the world and the flesh. This is only to exchange the devil of the flesh for the devil of casuistry. Such symbolism breaks down completely; for, firstly, there are, in other cathedrals, instances of gross and obscene subjects exalted high on the capitals of pillars;* secondly, in our own choir-stalls there is (on the nineteenth miserere, south side, counting from the Dean's stall) a sculpture which can be symbolical of nothing but a little demon crouching under the monk's seat and disturbing his meditations with half-repressed sniggers. The subject is a fox

* *Cf.* also such curious institutions of the mediæval Church as "The Feast of Fools," "The Boy Bishop," etc., described in E. K. Chambers's "The Mediæval Stage."

disguised as a monk, offering a gift to a nun. Of such work there was much in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and all conceived in the same spirit.

> "Jankin at the Agnus *
> Bereth the Pax brede ;
> He twinkled,† but he said noghte,
> And on mine fote he trede. . . ."

§ 8.

In the north-west tower of the cathedral, the Bishop's chapel, a little room full of rust and corruption, has a vaulted roof with fan-tracery. The vaults are a poor sham, long since exposed; through the whitewash, now blistered, smirched, abraded, the woodwork shows up unmistakable. Indeed, there was never much attempt at pretence, for you could always have seen the heads of the nails attaching the panels to the stone roof—a roof of Norman work with groined vaulting. The old age of plaster and whitewash is degraded and slatternly. And yet in spite of—perhaps even because of—its irredeemable unloveliness, the place is not without some kind of pitiable charm, enough, it may be, to keep you here pondering over the contrast between this and the triumphant loveliness of the choir-stalls.

* Quoted from Sidgwick and Chambers's "Early English Lyrics."
† "Winked."

§ 9.

There are three pages in Canon Morris's book that make one's heart glow; they reproduce the inventory of vestments, plate, and other valuables seized from all the churches in Chester in the reign of Edward VI: they were sold, and the money held "at His Majesty's pleasure." Now, among the names of commissioners charged with this business is that of John Bird, first Bishop of Chester. He is our Vicar of Bray, but lacks the geniality of that supple prelate. He was a one-eyed rogue who started his career as a Carmelite Friar in Coventry, and was reputed a severe disciplinarian. When Henry VIII. conceived the idea of reforming the Church in order to divorce Katherine of Aragon, John Bird, who had become a favourite by championing the doctrine of Supremacy, was sent to persuade that unfortunate lady to abandon the title of Queen. He blandished in vain. Four years afterwards he was one of the party who crossed into Germany to negotiate Henry's marriage with poor ugly Anne of Cleves. Later on he continued his noble career of wardrobe priest by writing a treatise to justify Henry's divorce from Anne. The bishopric of Chester was his reward. From the pulpit he thundered against Transubstantiation and the Mass. He married. He busied himself with stripping the Chester churches of idolatrous ornaments —at a price. No more zealous Reformer could be found. Then came the catastrophe of Mary's accession. Without an instant's delay Bird, now a septuagenarian,

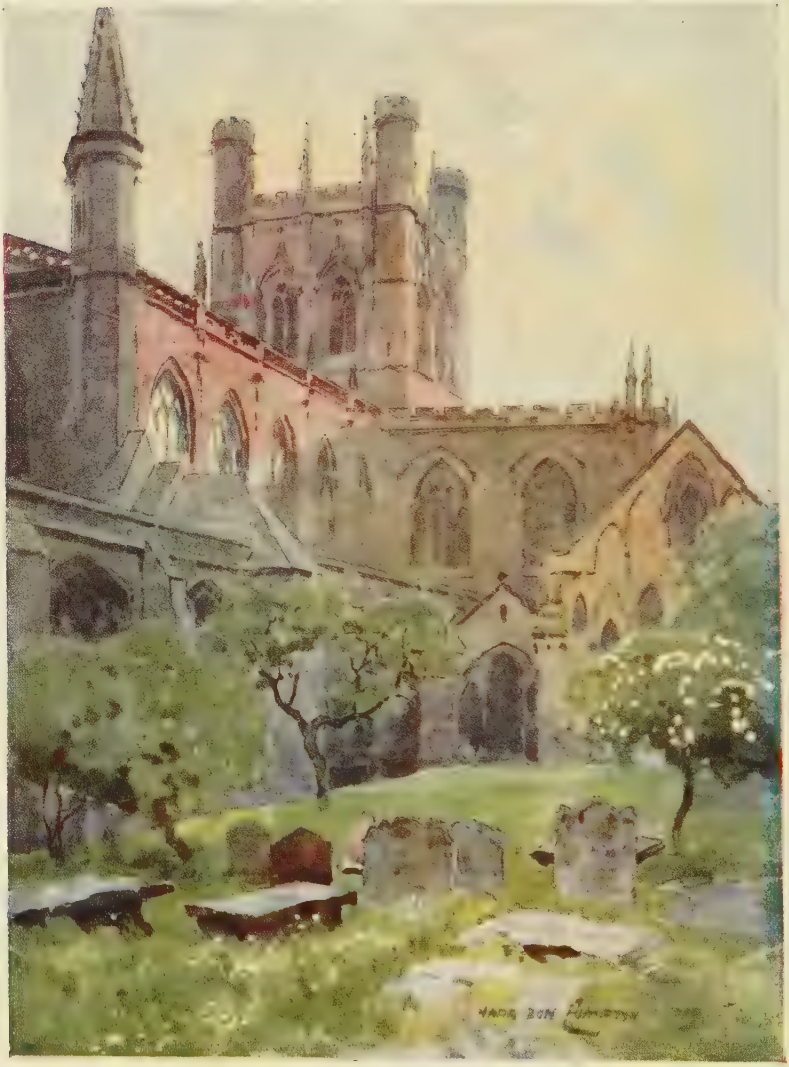
dismissed his wife, and, prostrating himself at Mary's feet, whined that he had married against his own will. It was useless. He was turned out of his bishopric. Still, he had not lost the art of currying favour, for we find Bonner presenting him with the living of Dunmow —a place whose associations with marital felicity must have appealed to him rarely. Here is a glimpse of his last days. Bonner had sent him to convert a recalcitrant named Hankes. "So he took me," says Hankes, "into his chamber and sat him down on a chair and said to me, 'I would to God I could do you some good. Ye are a young man, and I would not wish you to go too far, but learn of your elders to bear somewhat.'" Hankes replied, "I will bear with nothing that is contrary to the word of God." He goes on, "And I looked that the old Bishop should have made me an answer, but he was fast asleep."*

One more glimpse at the post-Reformation history of the cathedral. It was not a year after John Bird's deposition that George Marsh, a Protestant preacher of Lancashire, was burnt at the stake in Boughton. The citizens under John Cooper attempted his rescue—an evil hour for Cooper—but the Sheriff's men beat them back; and next Sunday Bishop Cotes proclaimed Marsh "a heretic, burnt like a heretic, and now a firebrand in Hell."†

Under such tempestuous skies the glory of

* Quoted in an article by Mr. Sanders in the *Journal of Chester Archæological Society*, 13 N. S.

† Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 72.



THE CATHEDRAL, FROM NORTH-EAST

St. Werburgh set. Another half-century sees the cathedral whitewashed. No more chasubles and copes, chalices, pateræ and censers, no scented candles or reliquaries of silver and gold, no banners, no plain-chant; gone are the gems from St. Werburgh's shrine, gone the bells from the tower, the stained glass from the windows. Only some traces of an ancient love of rich textures and subtle rhythms haunts the immortal music of the prayers of Cranmer.

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V

THE WIZARD DEE

"And following Dee, which Britons long ygone
Did call divine. . . ."

§ 1.

In Greece, for a city of the same history as Chester which draws its life-principle from the river flowing by its walls, they would have wrought a myth of some eponymous hero, maybe a Zeus-born, priestly harp-player, how he vanquished hill deities of the Cymry, and with Poseidon's aid reared to the music of his harp a high-fenced city by the sacred stream. Certainly there would have been a yearly marshalling of processions to the river-bank, a tossing of wreaths and symbolic offerings into the waters, while on the sward before the temple young men and maidens wove intricate dance-patterns, sunny limbs flashing, flutes wailing and rippling, voices raising into the blue air the exploits of the hero founder, intoned to grave, simple harmonies.

The Dee is the father of our city as surely as the Thames is of London, the Severn of Bristol. The military importance of the low sandstone mound com-

manding the last ford across the river has already been explained. But the Dee was more than a line of defence: like all rivers, it was the earliest form of highway into the interior. For many centuries merchant ships of good size could win to the city from the open sea. Moreover, by building a dam across the river just above the ford, Hugh Lupus yoked the waters and used them to turn mills for grinding corn and fulling cloth. As a result Dee Mills are famous in story and song.

I suppose that words and music, "blest pair of sirens," were never so ill matched as in that song "The Jolly Miller of Dee." You can imagine "The Elegant Miller," or "The Fairy-like," or "The Lovesick," but never "The Jolly." Tristan might have died to that tune, or Sir Philip Sidney have pushed away the draught of water at Zutphen; but it passes the wit of man to find in these subdued, mournful cadences the sturdy individualism that sang from morn to night—"no lark so blithe as he."

The song has it that nobody cared for the miller. This is to understate the case. Plumbers and schoolmasters being unknown or rare in those days, all the contempt and odium which in our time is the lot of those two callings was then concentrated upon millers and alewives. There were some, no doubt, whose attitude towards the Miller of Dee was one of disdainful indifference, others who went no farther than complaint or abuse; but many were strenuously aggressive. Ieuan ap Gogh rushed upon him with a dagger, Richard Wronosome drew his sword: even

weak, defenceless women, such as Margaret Sully, became violent and headed attacks upon the mill.

Sometimes the situation developed into a small battle —"Thomas Kydde struck John Brerewood with a staff, drawing blood: John returned the compliment with a poleaxe, felling Thomas to the ground with a blow on the neck. Hugh le Walker, on the same day, struck David le Walker with an axe, and David on the following day returned the blow in the same way."*

The Dee Mills to-day† are in outward appearance like a huge prison; there is something grim and graceless about them, scarcely to be dissolved out by the light of summer sunsets, when the river at dead low-water is like a sheet of mother-of-pearl. In former times the citizens looked on the mills as a symbol of tyranny, a sort of Bastille. All were forced by law to bring their grain to the Miller of Dee for grinding. For the original Miller of Dee was the Earl himself, and the citizens were his "men," his serfs, out of whom he made his profit as he might; therefore he forced them to bring their grain to his mill, and took his payment in kind, so many "grains," or "tolhops," from each sack. He would cheat as often as he could, taking twice the legal amount—Chaucer even says, "Well coude he stelen corn, and tollen thryes"—and in some cases would keep back the ground meal on one pretext or another till the customer paid him twopence or sixpence.

The miller waxed fat and jolly.

* Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

† Written 1909. The Dee Mills have since been done away with.

And yet his thoughts were not all taken up with unrighteous gain ; he was a master of his craft—"He had a thombe of gold," says Chaucer, meaning that his success depended partly on his skill in judging the work his millstones were doing, by rubbing the grains between finger and thumb. Again, it is a life to develop a man's latent sensibilities. The noise of churned waters, the regular pulsations of the machine, the quick response to his hand on the levers, the brightness and clean savour of the fresh-ground meal, all this must have its influence even if he were unconscious, making him say that his mill was "as parent, child, and wife" to him. He leased the mill—or mills, since there were more than one—from the Earl himself.

Of all the people who leased Dee Mills the most remarkable was undoubtedly Richard Ingeniator—"the Engineer." He was employed by Edward I. on the fortifications of Rhuddlan and Flint. The title "engineer" is misleading. Richard was what was more generally styled a "master mason." The actual design of the castles in Wales was Edward's work ;* fortification had been the art of Kings since the days of Cœur de Lion. Richard the Engineer provided materials and workmen and personal supervision. His business prospered, and he invested his money in Dee Mills, leasing them of the King for £200. "If thou hadst the rent of Dee Mills, thou wouldst spend it," was a reproach

* Dr. J. E. Morris mentions Master James de St. George as the chief architect and designer of Rhuddlan ("The Welsh Wars of Edward I.," p. 145).

inapplicable to Richard. He kept a jealous eye on his investment. One day he went out for a walk and met William Fox bringing a cartload of stale bread from Worcester into the city; promptly he caused the cartload to be seized and carried off by his men. No one in Chester might eat bread save such as was made with meal ground in Richard's mill.

Richard might have served as model for the original idea of the Jolly Miller. He certainly kept himself to himself—caring for none, by none cared for. The mills fastened their subtle, imperious charm upon him; absorbed in the music of the millstream, the rhythmic antiphony of wheel and wheel, the hiss of golden grain shooting into the hopper, the insistent rumble of the mill wheels, he forgot all other interests.

§ 2.

Some might condemn Richard as selfish and grasping. He badgered his Sovereign for compensation against losses sustained while he was absent fortress-building in North Wales. In an age when citizenship called for self-sacrifice and strenuous effort he only twice took up the burden of mayoralty. We hear neither good nor ill of him, though a man could not in those days forward the general deed of man without raising clouds of scandal and abuse. It was a time when townsmen were feeling their way towards independence and self-government. The "landed interest" were jealous and in general oppressive. The prosperity of any

industry was looked upon as an excellent reason for laying heavy taxes and fines upon it. Trade was regarded as something not quite manly, and its profits the legitimate prey of war-lords. To guard against dangers from this quarter, and also against competition of outsiders, the townsmen jealously covered up their own commerce with a shell of trade-laws intended to be protective, but only too likely to become asphyxiating. Suppose that you are a baker in Chester in the fourteenth century. In the first place you will be forced to become a member of the Chester Gild Merchant—a society of traders to whom the Earl has for a certain sum entrusted the regulation of commerce in the city. Unless you belong to this, you will have to pay heavy fines to be allowed to sell your bread at all, and even when these are paid you will only be allowed to sell at certain disadvantageous hours, arranged so as to give the gildsmen the pick of the custom. Even if you are a gildsman all is by no means plain sailing. You will buy your grain in the market, but not till after eleven o'clock; the private citizen must first be served before you can be allowed to buy wholesale. If you are cunning you will try to catch grain coming to market before it has reached the city gates, thus securing a full supply at a low price. Do not be detected in this; if you are, you will pay a heavy fine, and perhaps be thrown out of the Merchant Gild. Nor may you speculate in wheat, buying up at one price to sell again at another. This is "regrating," and is punished by law. Your grain must be taken to the

Dee Mills for grinding, and you will suffer the Jolly Miller's extortions. The maximum price at which you may sell your bread will be fixed by the Mayor in an "Assize of Bread," so also will its quality. An eye will be kept on you to see that you make no use of bran or beans.

You will find it necessary to belong not only to the Merchant Gild, but also to the "Mystery," or "Craft," of Bakers, established "time out of mind" within the city. If you are a member of this Mystery you will have to share a joint responsibility. If a majority of your brethren, falling on hard times, put up their shutters, the whole Mystery, guilty and innocent together, will be thrust by the Mayor into the dark, noisome dungeon under the Northgate—a cellar inadequately supplied with air by means of pipes—until you go on your marrow-bones and cry mercy and consent to make bread at a loss, that the "commonalty" may be supplied. The wages you pay your journeymen will be fixed either by the chief men of the Craft or by some other authority, and you will have to pay the sum in fat years and lean. For all these discomforts you will have to console yourself by beating your two or three prentice boys—for the law permits you to chastise them so long as you do not actually injure them.

DEE MILLS, BRIDGE AND WEIR

§ 3.

Richard the Engineer and all the wealthiest citizens had their houses in Watergate Street. The beautiful, half-timbered style for which Chester is famous did not come in until the end of the fifteenth century, and was the last stage in a slow evolution of domestic architecture, beginning with the destruction of Romano-British Deva by the Saxons. When men began to filter back into Waste Chester the houses of the Saxon city were no more than hovels, one story high, things of wattle and daub, roofed with straw thatch. They stood in broken ranks, perched on the earth mounds whose core was Roman débris. The streets themselves were no better than miry lanes. And yet Saxon Chester was, as things were reckoned then, a flourishing city.

The Norman Conquest probably wrought little change in the domestic architecture of the place. However, as strong rule and comparative peace made the whole country richer, progress must have been made. We cannot gauge it, because we have no domestic buildings remaining to us of earlier date than the fifteenth century —*i.e.*, no *town* houses of the humbler sort. There are domestic apartments in castles, but these are no guide. Great fires consumed large areas of the city, breaking out as frequently as in Stamboul of to-day. In Stamboul fire-engines are not provided,* and there are no neat fire-alarms distributed along the streets. The fire-alarm is given from the Galata Tower by a watchman, and swift runners immediately set out carrying long poles.

*This passage was written in 1909.

The poles have at their extremities hooked talons of steel, and the use of them is to haul down the crazy wooden shanties in front of the line of advancing fire, which, thus deprived of fuel, will die out. These same methods were in use in mediæval Chester. Bradshaw describes the fire of 1180:

"On sonday in mydlenton the viii houre,
Whan every paresshen theyr churche went to,
As all christen people of dutie shulde do,
A fyre by infortune rose up sodeinly,
All flamyng fervent or the people dyd espy.

"This fearefull fire encreased more and more,
Piteously wastyng hous chambre and hall;
The citizens were ready their cite to succour,
Showed all their diligence and labour continuall.

"Some cried for water, some for hookes dyd call,
Some used other engins by crafte and policy,
Some pulled downe houses afore the fire, truly.

* * * * *

"Others that were impotent mekely gan praye
Our blessed Lord on them to have pite

* * * * *

Many riall places fell adowne that day,
Riche marchauntes houses brought to distruction,
Churches and chapels went to great decay;
That tyme was brent the more part of the towne;
And to this present day is a famous opinion
Howe a myghty churche, a mynstre of saynt Michaell,
That season was brent and to ruyne fell."

The people then cried out for help to St. Werburgh and the Abbot and monks:

"Repleit with mekenes and fervent charite
Toke the holy shrine in prayer and devocion,

Syngyng the letanie bare it in procession,
Compasyng the fyre in every strete and place,
Trusting in Werburge for helpe, aide and grace.

"Whan they had ended the holy letanye
From place to place procedyng in stacion
Anone a stremyng starre appered sodaynle,
A white dove descended afore the congregacion.

* * * * *

So by the merite of this blessed virgin
The fire began to cesse—a myracle clere—
Nat passyng the place where the holy shryne
Was borne by the bretherne as playnly dyd appere.
The citezens dyd helpe in their beste manere;
The fervent great fire extincted was indede
By grace above nature in story we may rede."

In Chester the frequency of fires cannot, as in Stamboul, be accounted for by the existence of fire insurance companies. It was due in the main to sheer carelessness. If your house has no proper chimney, but only a hole in the roof, and that roof is of straw thatch, it requires no divine vaticinatory power to foretell what will happen when you feed your fire with dried gorse and kindle a blaze by the vigorous use of bellows.

The houses, as was explained, stood above the road-level on banks formed of débris. At first paths ran along the house fronts skirting the indefinite edge of the débris banks. Later—at what period nobody knows—the second story of the houses was thrust forward, and supported on stout timber posts (as in Foregate Street to-day). Thus the path was roofed over. At the same time, or earlier, cellars were dug into the débris banks and lined and vaulted in stone, the roof some-

times being carried on rows of pillars. Just in front of the banks tradesmen pitched their booths. As soon as these booths became permanent shops, and the first floor of the houses above had been thrust forward all along the street so as to form a continuous covered way, you had the Rows, with their two stories of shops and their crypts.*

By the end of the fourteenth century most tradesmen's houses were wooden structures, two stories high, with gables fronting the streets. At the apex of the gable of many houses a pulley was fixed for hauling up such commodities as were stored in the loft under the roof. The windows were unglazed, but provided with heavy wooden shutters. Therefore in winter you could choose between freezing in the daylight or being stifled in smoky darkness.

If, after you had pulled the shutters to, the room still remained cold, you could light your fire in the ground-floor room, called the "solar," which served as dining-room and drawing-room. There were no chimneys; the smoke of your fire escaped through cracks in the ceiling and gaps in door and shutter. The room was dark except for the firelight; it was full of smoke and draughty, but it was comparatively warm. "Solar" must be derived very much on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle from "sol"—the sun. The floor was of

* I must explain that this is not an accepted theory; indeed, there is as yet no generally received theory. Mr. Henry Taylor is of opinion that the crypts, or cellars, were built *before* the shops above them.

beaten earth, covered with rushes, which were pleasant enough when fresh ; but as they were renewed no more than once a month—or even less frequently—they were filled with accumulations of broken food and all kinds of unmentionable abominations.

The rooms of the average citizen were scantily furnished. The fourteenth or fifteenth century solar inside bare walls contained benches (such a thing as an armchair was undreamt of), a table on trestles driven into the earthen floor, and little else except a few shelves, and perhaps a spinning-wheel. Here is a list of all the worldly goods of Benet the cook : One moulding-board, one tribula, two pails, one skymer (whatever that may be), one rolling-pin, four stools, and half a dozen blankets. Another citizen had one iron stove, two pewter dishes, and a large number of brass dishes. There were probably also pewter spoons in most houses. You ate neither off earthenware nor pewter, but off thick circular slabs of bread called "trenchers." If you were poor, you finished off your meal by eating your trencher ; if you were rich, you threw it to a dog ; if the dog did not care for it, it was left lying. No matter, it was soon trodden into the rushes.

§ 4.

The description "Merry England" is wedded, in most people's minds, to the idea of Maypoles, Queens of the May, and all the joy and beauty of a fine spring. Certainly, in the days when the name Merry was earned,

May and the whole season of spring were in special honour. Spring appealed to an age that, whatever its failings, was, in its heart's depths, in love with fragile, immaculate beauty, and had set up maiden purity as a knightly ideal. They sang :

> "Sumer is icumen in
> Lhude* sing cuccu!
> Groweth sed† and bloweth med‡
> And springth the wude nu,
> Sing, cuccu!"

And again :

> "Lenten is come with love to toune,
> With blosmen ant with briddes § roune,‖
> That all this blisse bryngeth. . . ."

Or yet once more, from a score of songs :

> "The blostme ginneth springe and spred
> Both in tres and eke on mede,
> The lilie mid her faire wlite¶
> Wolcumeth me. . . ."

And what poem opens—

> "When that Aprille with his shoures sote . . ."?

Some have professed to find only natural an affinity between the spring of the year and the spring of a nation's history. The modern historian will shift uneasily in his chair if you suggest this. He will say that all this May-poetry came over with the Plantagenets from Anjou, where the month is milder than in

* Loud. † Seed. ‡ Meadow. § Birds. ‖ Song. ¶ Hue.

England.* Or else he may explain that in the Middle Ages indoor life during winter was so vile, that people could not but burst into songs of praise and joy when came the first warm day, which promised an escape from grime and draughts and darkness and smoke, from rooms where hens and pigs shared with human beings the confined and filthy floor-space ; finally, that under such circumstances the folk, noticing

> "The young lambs bound
> As to the tabor's sound,"

were congratulating themselves because the dangerous winter diet of salt-junk could now for a while be abandoned. Yet, in Chester, when you had escaped from bare, malodorous interiors and made your way into the streets, what met your eyes may have been picturesque ; it was certainly squalid and disorderly. The road was deep in mire, and in the blackest and filthiest and deepest of the mire great swine wallowing—not round, friendly pinkish pigs, but gaunt, savage, long-legged brutes, that yielded poor meat, for our ancestors did not understand the art of breeding. All the garbage of the houses was flung into the streets (just as in Stamboul to-day), and the waste waters were poured there also, shot often from the top floor of the houses on either side ; nor were they free to flow off,

* And yet this superstition of spring lingers. A colonial writer exclaims : "Is there any place on earth, or under the heaven to which we hope to go, more beautiful, more refreshing, more exquisite, than England in the spring ?"

but formed into stagnant, stinking pools, blocked by heaps of garbage and dung or by inequalities in the road level. Laws were constantly being made inflicting punishment on those who obstructed the streets in this way. The laws read after this manner—"Where dyvers and sondry of the lanes within this city are so filthy and full of muck and noysom that neither cart-horse nor man shall in tyme be able without danger to passe through the same," therefore every person shall cleanse away the muck from the lanes, "viz. every person so farr as his grounde extendeth," and the fine in default is fixed at xii^{d}.* But the citizens laughed at these laws, and the aldermen themselves broke their own regulations by stacking their timber, wine-casks, gorse, and so forth, in the roadway. Such, then, were the streets, and the mire and filth were spattered by lurching carts across the pavement and on to the goods set out for sale in the "seldæ"—temporary wooden booths. In an Eastern city, again — especially in Constantinople—you can obtain an accurate idea of the results. If you are, by any adventure of the intellect, hovering on the brink of vegetarianism, the sight of a butcher's shop in Stamboul will decide you. In two other respects also the streets of mediæval Chester resembled the streets of an Oriental town to-day. Firstly, the shops in their different kinds were not scattered promiscuously throughout the city. All the butchers' shops were together in one part, all the iron-mongers' in another, and so forth, the different groups

* Morris, p. 261.

being called "Rows"—Mercers' Row, Flessheners' Row, etc. Traces of this still remain in other towns—*e.g.*, Butchers' Row at Shrewsbury. Secondly, the actual appearance of the shop much resembled that of an Oriental shop. There was no "shop-front," in the modern sense of the word, in which goods might be displayed, piled up in ingeniously balanced structures behind plate-glass windows. There were, of course, no windows—cheap methods of glass-making had not been invented yet, and not everybody could afford the beryl with which noblemen filled their windows. The shop was open to the street, and all the goods were kept inside, stored away, for the most part; all the advertisement consisted of signs swinging nine feet above the roadway, and of the prentice boys who patrolled the side-walks crying their masters' wares.

§ 5.

By picking and stealing from Canon Morris's book one can amass material for a picture of street life in Chester of this period. There are unpleasant sights and odours, but the west wind mitigates the latter. (What was said of Avignon—"sine vento venenosa"—might be said of most mediæval towns.) The normal death-rate is incredible; plague has been recurring from year to year ever since the awful days of 1349. Imagine what the town would be, were it not that behind the single row of houses lining each street all the ground is open. If you can stand it, we will

wander from point to point, picking our way carefully among the many obstacles.

The day will have begun early for the citizens—the mediæval time-table ran, "Lever à cinq, diner à neuf. . . ." By six o'clock all is in full swing, and the streets resound with the crack of the carter's whip, the rattle of harness and wheel, the din of hammers and saws and axes, with the whirr of looms and the grunts of bakers kneading their paste, and the cries of street hawkers, "Hot pies, hot! Gode gris [pigs] and geese." At one doorway, where a group of persons has gathered, a loud and excited conversation is proceeding. A prosperous merchant in a long gown with "dagged" (scalloped) edges is remonstrating with an old lady in a dirty wimple and ragged skirts. He complains that when she lights a fire in her solar the smoke penetrates through cracks in her ceiling to the row above and causes him much inconvenience. The lady's reply is high-pitched, immoderate and truculent. They go at it hotly, but the merchant is routed in the end, and retires purple in the face, his liripipe (the long cloth pigtail that hangs down from his cabbage-shaped bonnet) quivering with righteous indignation. That old lady will be dragged into court to-morrow and fined; she has already been in trouble several times for eavesdropping under citizens' windows—an offence then punishable at law.—The taverns are full. Some are mere cellars under the Rows, with floors of beaten earth and crassed walls, dark and unsavoury. Here you might take your dinner for 4d. or 6d., paying an

extra penny for a flagon of ale. The alewife was as unpopular as the baker. In the "Harrowing of Hell" she says:

> "Of cannes I kepte no trewe measuer,
> My cuppes I soulde at my pleasuer
> Deceavinge manye a creature,
> Tho my ale were naughte.
> And when I was a brewer longe,
> With hoopes* I made my ale stronge,
> Ashes and erbes I blend amonge,
> And marred so good maulte."

And Satan says to her:

> "Welckom, deare darling. . . .
> Though Jesus be gone with† our meanye,
> Yet shall thou abyde heare still with me
> In paine without ende."

You may fill the place with characters from "Piers Plowman"—Sis the cobbler, Wat the warren-keeper and his wife, Tim the tinker and two of his prentices, Clarice of Cockslane, the "clerke of the cherche," a player on the rebec, a scavenger, Rose the dish-seller, all playing at "The New Fair" game, where the loser stood a gallon of ale. Here, too, you might find Will Kyng recounting how he was fined twelve pence for walking the streets after dark, while Cook le Taverner, fingering his baselard,‡ is vowing that he will be the death of his neighbour and rival, Thomas. The "clerke from the cherche" derides him with drunken humour,

* Hops. † "Has done away with." ‡ Dagger.

and beating time with his tankard on the greasy board, bellows a well-known song :

"My baselard hath a wrethen* hafte ;
When I am full of ale caughte,
It is great dred of manslaughte,
For then I bere my baselard.

"As I yede† up in the strete
With a cartere I 'gan mete.
'Felawe,' he said, 'so mote I the,‡
Thou shalt forego thy baselard.'

"The cartere his whippe began to take,
And all mine fleiche began to quake,
And I was left for to escape,
And there I left my baselard."

Neighbour to the reprobate clerk is a journeyman weaver, head and arms all bound up. He has been in the great battle that took place at the High Cross on Corpus Christi Day. The journeymen of many crafts had been meeting secretly and arranging to strike for higher wages. Their infuriated masters had thereupon armed themselves with poleaxes, baselards, staves, intending to raid the meeting-place of the journeymen. Someone, however, gave the alarm ; the journeymen came out in force, and the result was a mêlée, in which the citizens broke each other's coxcombs as fast as a cook breaks eggs.

Should all this violence depress you, take note of the comparative prosperity of all ranks of people. There *is* a "submerged" population, but it is very small :

* "Twisted." † "Went." ‡ "So may I thrive."

very few cannot afford meat to their meals and a cup of ale. Life may be ruder, but it is brighter and more hearty. There are violent contrasts of wealth and poverty, and all real civic power is in the hands of the rich ; and yet there is more sense of companionship. In an age when no newspapers, pipes, and armchairs exist to take up a man's leisure, then you are forced to be sociable. All your pleasures are taken in public. You would be allowed much less than nowadays to live to yourself, to become morbid and introspective. As for the perfection of certain handicrafts and of sculpture and architecture, this has been the theme of perhaps too many enthusiasts since the days of Ruskin. The danger lately has been that we should forget, not the virtues, but the failings of the fourteenth century.

After a day spent in this strange atmosphere of contrasts between squalor and magnificence, you will find no softer couch than a straw pallet in a room shared with perhaps half a dozen other persons. You will be in bed by nine o'clock, if not earlier ; there is no inducement to sit up after dark, since no lights are allowed after curfew, and to walk abroad is forbidden by law. Your rest may be disturbed by uproar in the streets and frenzied ringing of St. Peter's bell. The "hue and cry" has been raised. You rush out with any improvised weapon towards the storm-centre, guided by the noise and by flickering torches. What has happened ? It is the wild Welshman, Ieuan ap Madok, who is up and about with a few score of fellow-countrymen and disreputable hooligans, battering at the doors

of some enemy and breaking the Earl's peace. You turn up on the scene of action to find that he has just been taken in charge. He will be fined forty shillings for the escapade.

§ 6.

All the way from Sandycroft to Holywell, between rail and river, a line of factory chimneys weaves a canopy of smoke, veiling the low foothills of Flintshire. There are quays crowded with shipping, which by favour of the tide has made its way over the "Sands of Dee" to Connah's Quay, Flint, or Mostyn. Rarely does one small sailing-craft reach upstream as far as the forlorn little cobbled wharf overgrown with moss that lies just below the gasworks at Chester; yet in days before rows of houses had been built between the Water-Tower and the Dee, when the river flowed unconfined past Saughall, Shotwick, and Burton, Chester in the thirteenth and the first part of the fourteenth century, while the English Channel and North Sea were in the hands of great German and Italian trading companies, was, by virtue of her Irish trade, a port of the first rank, a rival of Bristol for the trade with Dublin and Drogheda. There was always something of interest to draw loafers down through the Watergate to the river-side. At one time there would be an expedition, "preparing to carry two hundred justices and nobles of England, with their followers," to Prince John's Irish campaign; or it is a terrified mayor

and aldermen escorting Prince John himself, the whole party slopping to and fro in the mud and rain, while the Prince swears by God's teeth and curses the contrary wind ; he is scarcely sobered by sudden news of his brother Geoffrey's death. Or yet again, amidst scarcely concealed jeers of the populace, Edward II. bleats in the arms of his beloved Gaveston, while trumpets sound and troops of beautiful boys shower roses, and the sun shines down on a brave show of silken scarves and embroidered banners. Poor "rex illiteratus," his ideal life was one continued pantomime transformation scene — Italian masks of Diana and Actæon — "sweet speeches, comedies, and pleasing shows." Why could he not be allowed to have his tinsel bowers and simpering fairies in peace, instead of being done to death between two tables in Berkeley Castle—a squalid end?

But such royal pageants were, of course, outside the routine of business. On most occasions the scene would be made up of half a dozen clumsy ships, square-rigged, of not more than 100 tons burthen, lying up along the quayside, with porters coming to and fro upon their gang-planks with sacks and crates and casks of wine. One great "cogge" is struggling in by sweep and warp. It is the *Holirode de Cestre*, with a cargo of Gascony wine. The Earl's men are waiting to board her and claim prisage for their master; he has a right to two casks of every cargo. The cargo is consigned to Thomas Hurell and Robert Coley, aldermen, who will store it in their fine vaulted crypts under their houses in Bridge Street and Watergate Street—just as

wine is stored in Messrs. Quellyn Roberts' crypt to this very day.

The mayor, accompanied by his brokers, is bustling down in haste through the Watergate. The arrival of the *Katerina*, a Breton ship from St. Malo, is announced with a cargo of salt fish, belonging to Roland of Dinan. Roland, of course, is not a freeman of Chester ; he is therefore bound to give the mayor and corporation first choice of buying his cargo as a "common bargain." The mayor is in a hurry because the pavement in front of his house needs repairing, and he intends that the proceeds of this common bargain shall go towards repairing that pavement. He will put the matter, of course, on the grounds of utility to the "poor commons of this city." The master of the *Katerina* had better not refuse the mayor's terms ; the haggling may by law continue for forty days ; not until then will the owner of the herring be free to sell to whom he pleases, But think how port dues will mount up during this time, and how the authorities may harass him for flinging rubbish overboard, may refuse to supply him with provisions, and may molest him and his crew in the town.

Such violence would not, indeed, be unfamiliar to the fourteenth-century shipman, who was often little better than a privateer—"of nyce conscience," says Chaucer, "took he no keep." And when he did fight, and had the upper hand, he did not shrink from making his enemies—of the Hanse, or the Staple, or the Italian cities—walk the plank. He knew they would do as much by him.

The wharves are littered with quintals of raisins, with bales of hides and furs, sheep fells, yarns and rugs and blankets, with lasts of eels and salted salmon—most of these from Ireland in ships which will leave Chester again loaded with grain, cheeses, salt from the wiches, bow staves, and manufactured articles. Most ships came from Dublin and Drogheda, but there were sometimes ships of St. Malo, Rouen, or Bilbao.

> "The grete galleys of Venees and Fflorence
> Be wel ladene with thynges of complacence,
> All spicerye, and of grocers' ware,
> Wyth swete wynes, all manner of chaffare,
> Apes and japes and marmasettes taylede,
> Nifles, trifles that litelle have availede. . . ."

This indictment of a fifteenth-century economist cannot be pronounced against Chester. I do find that in the sixteenth century Canon Morris records the importation of "marmaladowe, almonds, oranges," and "14 packs of velvet damask." But this is nothing compared with the luxuries that came to Bristol in ships of William Cannynges—great galleons of 900 tons that even in the fifteenth century adventured to the farthest Levant and outrivalled the "galleys of Venees and Fflorence," their cargo-lists reminding one of what was brought to Solomon in ships from Ophir or from Tarshish—"ivory and apes and peacocks," Venetian glasses, Chinese silks and ginger and porcelain, rugs of Turkey and Persia, spices, alum and mastic, brocades, cloth of gold, silver cups from Paris, tapestry of Arras, white damask, harbergeons of Milan. By the time

that the sea-towns on our southern and eastern coasts were importing such things Chester had fallen in importance from first to second or third rank. The harbour was silting up—for this some blame the mill-dam which Hugh Lupus had built, saying that it robs the river of that swirl which would carry the mud farther out into the estuary.* Chester had not the same stimulus towards increasing her trade as the south-eastern ports ; there were no great pasturelands behind, to send in to her ships that English wool for which all the world was clamouring. The fifteenth century, during which most towns were quietly and unobtrusively progressing in wealth and independence, was Chester's Dark Age. In the sixteenth century a wave of energy carried her ahead again, but she never quite regained the commercial importance she had enjoyed in the best centuries of the Middle Ages. Liverpool takes her place by reason of the clean deep channel of the Mersey.

* In 1610 Parliament ordered the dam to be cut, but the order was not obeyed.

VI

SCENICUS INFAMIS

"For, O, for, O, the hobby-horse is forgot. . . ."

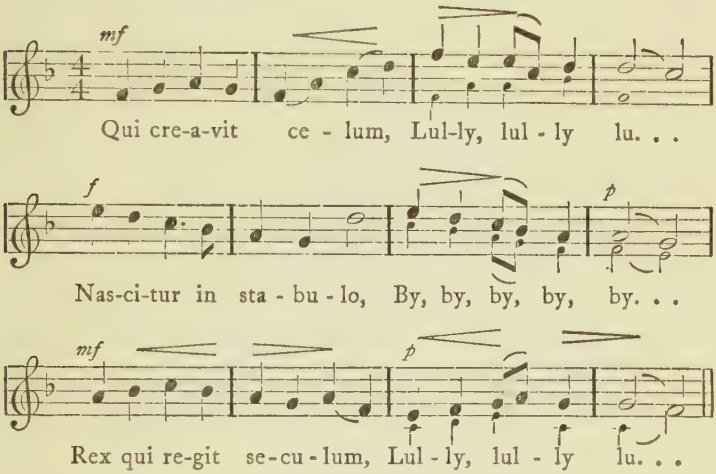
§ 1.

Not far from where the militia barrack has been set over against the entrance to the castle (as it were a sham Carnarvon sidling away from a caricature of the Propylæa) there stood once the Benedictine Nunnery of St. Mary, founded by Randle Gernons. The last relic of their buildings has been transferred to Grosvenor Park; there, hidden away among the sombre evergreens, is a piece of wall and a gateway whose lowliness and simplicity just strike the keynote of every memory remaining to us of the nuns of St. Mary. There are stains on the history of nearly all the other religious institutions in Chester. The citizens, for instance, were from time to time gratified by the spectacle of a free fight between the Carmelites and the monks of St. Werburgh. *Clerici* and *capellani* were mixed up in tavern brawls, or else, with gowns trussed up, went ranting and roaring down the streets after dark, bared steel in hand, stirring up *horribilis affraya.* Abbots

of St. Werburgh bedecked their dwellings with rare and beautiful possessions, and, sick with pride of place, despised all external authority, flouting even the King himself. Pardoners thrived on the sale of indulgences and pigs' bones. In short, with many of the religious the only question was which of their three chief vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity they should break first. Only the Grey Friars and the nuns of St. Mary never appear in any Court records of the city.

There is a picture called "Convent Thoughts" by the pre-Raphaelite Charles Collins; it represents simply a nun standing in a garden and surrounded with lilies, her countenance bent towards a flower. If lilies grew within St. Mary's walls, I am sure they were matched with just such pure, serene brows. In evidence we have that white bloom of melody, their carol. It has all the *naïveté* of the painter's colour-scheme, all the immaculate frailty of a convent thought. Recall the occasion and circumstances of the carol — the unwilling daylight, the savour of incense, the chill humidity of the air, wherein each candle burnt with a broad halo. With psalm and anthem the nuns approached the crèche wrought with such patience and joy out of such tinsel stuff; then, vowed to sterility, these women, yearning over the cradle, crooned, swaying to a hushaby rhythm, the "Qui creavit cœlum. . . ." Humour is the sap of history, and the records of St. Mary's are saved from being a *hortus siccus* by one single line occurring in their processional. One does not generally look for humour in a processional, but

THE CAROL OF THE NUNS OF ST. MARY'S, CHESTER (FIFTEENTH CENTURY).*



Joseph emit panniculum, by, by, etc.
Mater involvit puerum, lully, etc.
Et ponit in presepio, by, by, etc.

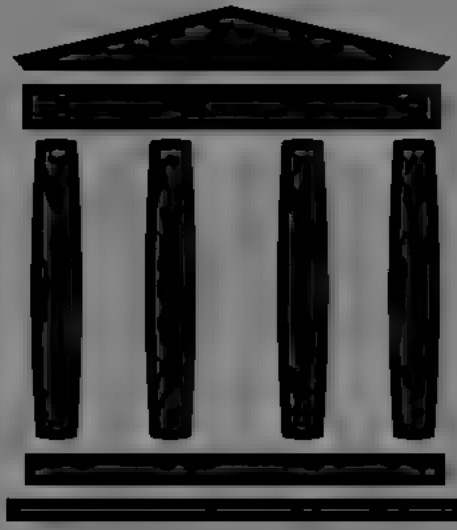
Inter animalia, lully, etc.
Jacent mundi gaudia, by, by, etc.
Dulcis super omnia, lully, etc.

Lactat mater domini, by, by, etc.
Osculatur parvulum, lully, etc.
Et adorat dominum, by, by, etc.

Roga mater filium, lully, etc.
Ut det nobis gaudium, by, by, etc.
In perenni gloria, lully, etc.

In sempiterna secula, by, by, etc.
In eternum et ultra, lully, etc.
Det nobis sua gaudia, by, by, etc.

* Rendered into modern notation by Professor J. C. Bridge, who has kindly permitted this reproduction.



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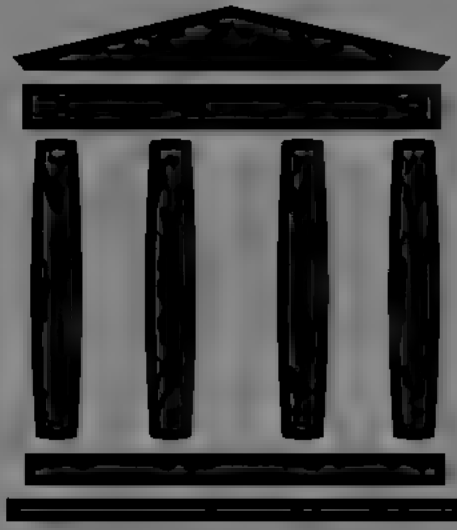

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ends what it could not eradicate. Not only this, but monks and priests, being human after all, began to feel at work within themselves also the impulse to give greater expressiveness to thoughts and desires by action, and, getting the whole matter, perhaps, in truer perspective, began to see that there is nothing inherently wrong in drama as such. To cut a long story short, they set themselves to dramatize passages of Scripture, beginning with the central fact of Christianity—the Resurrection. The Easter play formed a centre round which other plays were agglomerated by way of introduction and epilogue, until there was evolved a series covering all Bible history from the Creation to Doomsday. The transference of these plays from the chancel to the churchyard, and ultimately to the streets of the town, was the last step, and then you had the mystery plays complete.

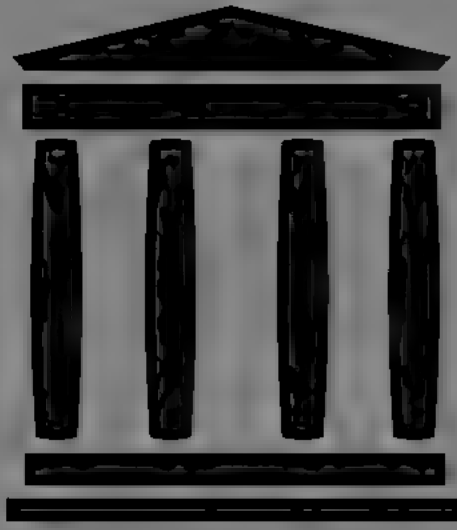
§ 2.

People used to tell one that the name "The Goat and Compasses" was a corruption of "God encompasseth us," and that the crossed legs of a monumental effigy signified that the dead knight had been on a Crusade. It was considered a sign of illiteracy not to know that "Punch and Judy" was simply "Pontius and Judæa," a survival of an old mystery play. Modern criticism has blasted all these cherished delusions. The Goat and Compasses is just the Goat and Compasses—the trade-mark of the Carpenters' Company of London; crossed legs are a

WATERGATE STREET

"sculptural convention"; and on those who speak patronizingly of Pontius and Judæa you are free to pour contempt: it is "the merest philological whimsy." And yet that last is a pity; for it would be pleasant to think that the shrill nasal "Roo-oooo-ti-too-ti-too-ti-tooty!" which holds the market square on a Saturday night is the last echo, distorted across four intervening centuries, of Pontius ranting on his pageant-car before the Abbey Gateway. All that we have left to link the present with the past in this particular is the unchanged temper of the crowd. The same form of humour takes the public to-day as in the fifteenth century. They laugh when Punch knocks down Judy with a resounding whack, just as they laughed when Noah's wife smote her husband on the head, or the shepherd-boy laid his three masters by the heels.

But before going on to consider the literary merits of the plays, it is of interest to consider the manner of presentation. In the first place, then, the public not only witnessed, but also itself produced, the plays, and the business of production filled many delightful weeks. There was the task of selecting suitable actors. Possibly the Mayor at Chester, as at York, presided over the selection, aided by a small number of experienced actors who had for several years taken important parts in various plays. Most candidates would present themselves for the part of Herod; it was a part full of sound and fury, a part in which a man could really "spread himself." Besides, Herod had an iron helmet, a terrific mask and a falchion, all of gold-foil.



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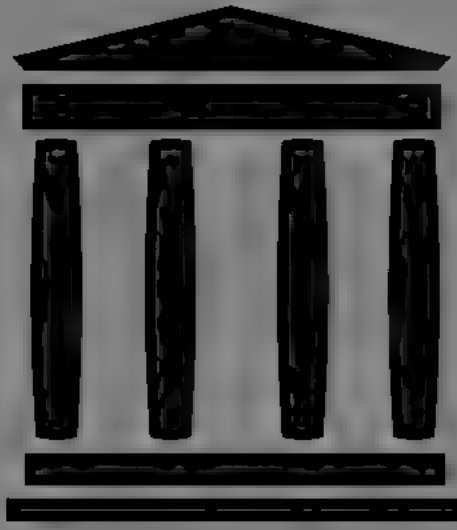

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caught up over one arm. I cannot attempt to describe the richness of the furred gowns embroidered with floral patterns. Women of humbler rank wore white kerchiefs over their heads and close-fitting gowns without fur collars or trains. There were the members of the crafts in their proper liveries; the Aldermen in their scarlet gowns and fur tippets; the Mayor with his sword borne before him, point upwards; and, apart, in front of the Abbey Gateway, the Abbot himself and his monks —shining in white and gold—and the feudal dependants of the Abbot, with banners and armorial bearings. Picture these innumerable restless clots of colour jammed together all along the tiers of scaffolding. The Rows (such as they were in the fifteenth century) were equally crowded, and heads looked out at every window. Dwellers in the principal streets made money by letting their front-rooms.

At an early hour of the morning all is ready, and the eager audience sees a huge two-storied vehicle plunging along with a prodigious creaking, in spite of a pound of soap employed to grease the wheels. Twelve porters are required to make it move. Pennants flutter from its summit, and it is beautiful with curtains—

> "Of velvit, satten, and damaske fine,
> Taffyta, sersnett of poppyngee grene."

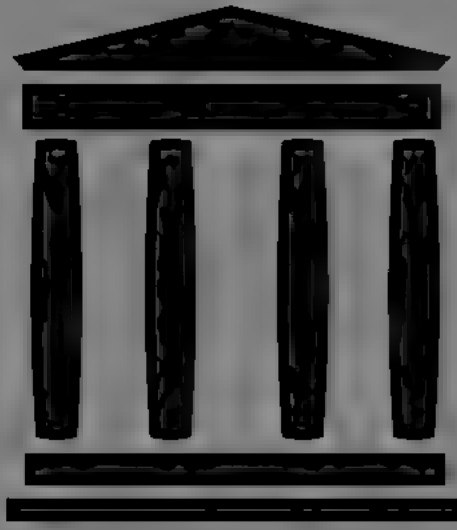
The woodwork of it is gilded and carved and enriched in every way. All of which glory is not achieved without expense. No wonder the carriage has a house all to itself when it is stored during the winter. After

it has been made ready for the actual pageant—new painted and gilded, and hung with its curtain—men are set to watch it all night, as if it were a valuable racehorse!

It is the Bakers' and Tanners' Pageant of "The Fall of Lucifer." After performing here in front of the Abbot, it will be pushed on to the High Cross, there to perform before the Mayor, its place here being taken by the Drapers' and Hosiers' Pageant of "The Creation." Each car performs its play four times—at the Abbey Gateway, the High Cross, in Watergate Street, and in Bridge Street. The performance of the cycle in its entirety occupies three days—I am told that the Persian mystery play of "Hussein and Ali" lasts a whole fortnight.

§ 3.

Let us leave the actors bouncing up and down like peas in a drum inside their "lower room" as the springless pageant crawls over the unequal pavements—one man quaking because he has forgotten his part, and is therefore liable to a fine and public disgrace—and glance at the actual stuff of the plays. The Chester plays are accused of being less original than the other great cycles; this is hardly a fair accusation on the part of a body of critics which, while it maintains that *all* the plays are evolved from one original series, has not as yet unearthed that series. On the other hand, it is agreed that the Chester mystery plays have a certain nobleness of tone, and avoid



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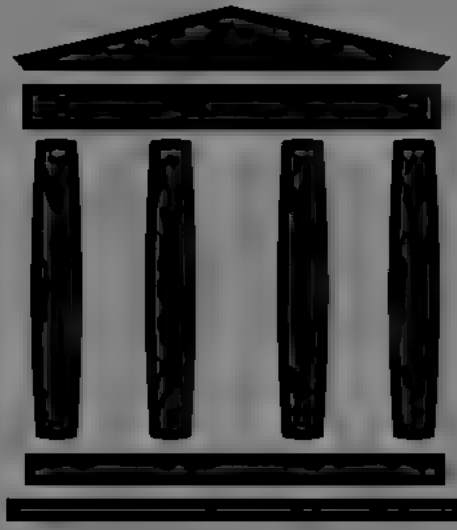

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which could not, for instance, catch the dramatic possibilities of Pilate. In "The Crucifixion" his personality has no definite outline at all; he oscillates inexplicably between friendliness and hatred in his treatment of Christ, for the most part seeming anxious to justify and release Him; but suddenly he makes a complete *volte face*, and says to his attendants:

> "Anon goe scorge this losingere,
> And beate hym leith and lym. . . ."

The playwright never asked himself what manner of man it was who, beholding the tormented Christ, could turn and say to the Jews, "Behold your King." In the play that remark is rendered:

> "Lordinges, here may you see
> Your Kinge all in his royalte,"

and is simply a jeer at Christ, quite impossible in the Pilate who had said:

> "You shall all witte veramente
> That I am cleane and innocente,
> And for to sheede in noe intente
> This rightwise man's bloode."

The significance of that extraordinary symbolical act —Pilate washing his hands—never stirred curiosity in the Chester mystery dramatist, who was, as I have already suggested, wholly taken up with versifying the actual words of the Gospel as closely as possible. Outside his range of vision was Pilate the imaginative cynic, wearied beyond endurance by the petty squabbles,

HALF-TIMBERED HOUSE IN WHITEFRIARS

boundless conceit, and fierce intolerance of these provincials. Then, again, Peter's denial, as it stands in the Gospel narrative, is of dramatic quality; yet the Chester version of it deliberately stops short of the climax, that moment of overmastering poignancy—"and immediately the cock crew . . . and he went out and wept bitterly." For Judas's treachery no deeper motive is assigned than a mean spite roused by Christ's acceptance of the Magdalen's precious ointment.

Once more, it is a fair answer to the above indictment that the case cannot justly be tried in this court; it is unfair to treat the mystery plays from a standpoint of absolute drama. They are pageants, and a good pageant is different from a good play, standing in no need of rapid action and brilliant dialogue, but piled up in big, strongly contrasted masses of light and shade on such a scale that psychological subtleties would simply pass unnoticed. They would be like cameos set on the side of a pyramid. The passions of individual souls do not hold the centre of the pageant-stage, but the souls of world-empires and the birth-pangs of creeds, pulsing to the rhythm of an "æonian music." The conception of such a thing as the Shakespearean tragedy was as much out of their power as the conception of an aeroplane or a Brahms sonata.

And yet, passing by this demurrer, and accepting the challenge as to dramatic merit, careful examination will reveal in this cycle the faint but undoubted beginnings of "Hamlet." One can point, for instance, in certain

passages, to an emotion expressed with directness and simplicity—for instance, the Magdalen's words :

> "Oyntment heare I have readye,
> To anoynte thy sweete bodye,
> Though I be wreched and unworthy,
> Wave me not from thy wonne [house]."

This is a quality so much admired in ballad literature. It occurs again in the speech of Trowll, the shepherd's boy, to the new-born Christ :

> "I offer unto thee a payer of my wyfe's oulde hose ;
> For other dremes my sonne
> Have I none for to geve
> That is worth anye thinge at all,
> But my good harte while I live,
> And my prayers till Death doe me call."

Besides earnestness and love, there is love's beautiful shadow, pathos. Consider the play of "Abraham and Isaac." Here the promise of dramatic greatness sounds not ambiguously. Isaac is a creation, not a machine like Pilate or Judas, but a live being who appeals to our sympathies. Indeed, that archaic severity which elsewhere produced automatic stiffness has here a wholesome, cleanly influence, and prevents the emotion from straying into slobbering sentimentality. Moreover, the manner in which the main situation is developed is admirable. The emotional tension is kept at a high pitch by the use of dramatic irony. The audience know what Abraham has to do, and he knows also. Isaac is in ignorance, and his cheerful-

ness and loving utterance are thrown into high relief at once. For the same reason Abraham's torments of soul are made yet more exquisite. The action is not allowed to linger, and Isaac soon begins to suspect something when he sees his father draw his sword, though no victim is in sight. Abraham half-heartedly attempts to reassure him, but the truth is soon apparent. Isaac begs for mercy in language whose *naïveté* deepens the pathos of the appeal :

> "Alas, father, is that your will
> Your owine childe for to spill
> Upon this hilles brinke ?
> If I have treasspassede in any degree
> With a yarde you maye beate me ;
> Put up your sorde, yf your will be,
> For I am but a childe. . . ."

But he soon gains mastery over his fears, and in meekness which was to remind the spectators of the meekness of the Lamb of God, he prepares himself. Yet Abraham is overwhelmed with anguish ; his limbs seem paralyzed. It is unfortunate that the desire of the dramatist to extract all the pathos from the situation defeats itself by causing the action at this point to drag itself slightly. At last, after piteous, reiterated appeals of Isaac to his father to release him from agony, Abraham lifts his hand only for the angel to seize the sword and point out the God-sent victim near at hand.

Some critic once asserted that out of the heart of a people proceed only two things—buffoonery and

tears. We have seen the tears shed; now we may turn to the laughter.

There is nothing in the Chester plays so funny as the Townley "Secunda Pastorum" or (still better) Pilate's "beadle" in the Yorkshire cycle shocked at the way his anxious master is "carrying on" with his wife in the Court of Justice. The most amusing scene in the Chester cycle is the episode of Noah and his wife. In the first part of the Flood Noah's wife appears as a reasonable human being ready to help her husband. But when the labours of ark-building commence her shrewish caprice threatens to frustrate his schemes. She will not do anything that he asks her to do. At first he displays considerable diplomatic power—"Let be all this beare [trouble]," he says:

> "For all these wene thou art maister,
> And so thou arte, by Sant John!"

But this subtlety is futile. When the ark is completed, and all the beasts on board, she stubbornly refuses to follow her family up the gang-plank—"Set up your sail," she says to her husband:

> "And rowe forth with evill haile,
> For withouten fayle
> I will not oute of this towne."

It is only by force that Noah's sons succeed in bringing her aboard the ark. The henpecked husband at the gangway strives to placate her as she steps on board—

> "Welckome, wiffe, into this botte,"

only to receive a cuff on the head—

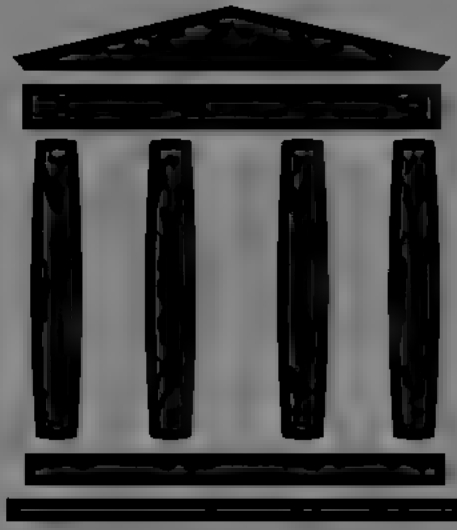
> "Have thou that for thy note.
>
> *Noye.*
>
> "Ha, ha! Marye, this is hotte!
> It is good for me to be still!"

Yet in all this play—especially if Dr. Bridge is right in pronouncing the "Gossips' Drinking Song" an addition of the sixteenth century—there is an absence of coarseness which is certainly remarkable when we consider the ages in which it was written and performed. It is boisterous but quite genuine merriment, and if it has disappeared from our stage and our streets, we had better, before congratulating ourselves, be certain that secret, sinister harm has taken its place.

Such a strange mixture, then, of boisterousness and cold simplicity is the Chester cycle. Moreover, it possesses a third characteristic of archaic art—dignity. It is a note struck at the very opening of the series in "The Fall of Lucifer"; it resounds in the full, grave music of those lines spoken by God:

> "My beames be all bewtitude
> All blesse is in my buildinge,
> All myrth lyeth in mansuetude
> Cum dei potentia."

A people who produced this produced also "Paradise Lost."



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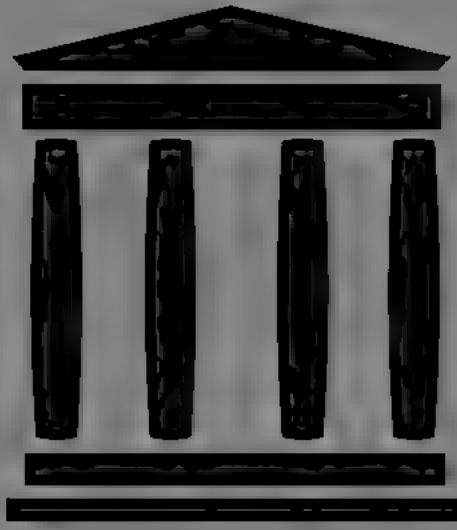

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we know of it is gathered from the notes of the famous Chester antiquary, Randle Holme. He kept a copy of all the expenses incurred in 1661.

The chief features were, firstly, the "pageants" of the different companies carrying, each in his proper costume, the actors of the mystery plays, and after this, grotesque cardboard images of "giantes and other beastes," much after the fashion of the French carnivals of our own time. The "beastes" were a unicorn, an antelope, a "fflower de luce," a camel; there was a dragon, and, of course, an elephant and castle. In the "castle" was a garlanded cupid who shot arrows at the fair among the crowd. There were also complicated and ingenious pieces of machinery—*e.g.*, the merchant's "mount," a ship which, as it moved forward, rocked and rolled in a remarkable life-like fashion. Song and dance also had their place, and Chester, no doubt, strove then to maintain a reputation—since unworthily lost—of patron of minstrels. The municipality subsidized a number of "waytes," or musicians, and provided them with a livery; they discoursed upon "howboies, recorders, cornets and violens." As for the morrismen, they were men of lesser substance. Originally, says Randle Holme, they had received ten shillings for their services at the Midsummer Show, "but now have no fee but the curtesye after the show at eny house what the please." Everything really was on a magnificent scale of preparation, and the total expense large for those times. The various "properties" would not last many years; they probably received

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some fairly boisterous treatment during the festivities; and, to take a single item, the giants' whiskers alone cost 10s. 10d. There was no lack of gay colour—for the merchants' mount four ounces of indigo, a pound and a half of russet, a pound each of "littmas," of pink, of gambooge, and a pound of red lead. These colours had to be obtained from London, and their carriage thence was five shillings. Tinfoil, cardboard, brown paper, silver and gold foil, buckram, linen, and sarsnett, all entered into the recipe; and the total cost of the mount was £4, which I suppose in money of our day might well amount to £24 or £25. The Mayor's mount cost about the same, but the giants' just five times as much. As in the case of the mystery-play expenses, much is made of refreshments for the inner man of the employés and of the performers—*e.g.*, "Mr. Maior made the companys drink beer as they passed by, and the Councill and Aldermen wine and a banquet at alighting or wyne and cakes." And before we turn away from Randle Holme's notes, one item may be copied, comment on it being quite unnecessary: "John Wright—for 35 dayes chiding and brawling and hindering the workmen from their worke, and also for fuddleing and drinkinge with several other leters and molestationers, just nothing, and right worthily he declareth [? deserveth] it . . . 00^{s} . . . 00^{d}."

I wonder if one is wrong in thinking of sixteenth-century England as so much merrier and more hearty than our own time. It is with reluctance one would

abandon this view of the period. Two things are against it, however—our present inability to fool gracefully, and the wide development, within that same century, of Puritanism. Yet, when one reads the Elizabethan song-books, hears the Elizabethan music, when one is faced with "As You Like It," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Holbein's pictures, and the whole trend of a strong tradition, one seems bound to believe that some national characteristic once present has been lost by us. It may be, as so many say, and as—in some particulars—the Chester records themselves suggest, that this same Puritanism, in abeyance at first, finally grew prevalent and strangled the merry, graceful humour. That is a subject which will be more fittingly treated in another chapter, but while we are immediately concerned with public festivities, the case of the Christmas-Day breakfasts may be mentioned as showing forces at work sinister to the gay abandonment of shows and pageants. It had been the custom of "diverse of the worshipfull of this citie" to set forth breakfasts in their houses on Christmas morning, presumably keeping open house. In Henry VIII.'s reign, in the mayoralty of Henry Gee, this was forbidden by an order of the Mayor and Council, "and allso that no maner person or persones go abroade in this citie mummyng in any place within the same citie, ther fayses being coveryd or disgysed. . . ." The reason alleged for stopping the breakfasts was that "manye dysorderid persons have used themselves raither all the daye after idellie in

wyse and wantonnes, then given themselves holy to contemplacion and prayre the same sacryt holye and prynsepaule feaste." It only remains to add that the attempted reforms of the city fathers failed; for "many dysorderid persons" still disgrace themselves on Christmas Day. A gentleman walking along Bridge Street at that season was amazed and shocked by the number of drunken men he saw abroad. Approaching a policeman, he said, "It's disgraceful the way these fellows behave on Christmas morning—drunk before dinner-time!" "Lord bless you, sir!" answered the policeman, "they aren't *drunk*—they're only *pretending*, because they don't want to seem unhappy-like on Christmas Day!" At a big warehouse fire on Christmas Day, a man, rocking gently to and fro on his heels, was heard to repeat over and over again, in rapt, ecstatic tones: "Oh! oh! There's a big fire and a crowd, and it's Christmas Day, and I'm drunk—how happy I am!"*

But to return to shows and pageants, we have one source left from which we can get a fully detailed picture of a public show—not the Midsummer Show, indeed, but an entertainment arranged for the visit of Henry, Prince of Wales, in 1610. The "Book of Words" of the show has been preserved, and is called "Chester's Triumph in Honour of Her Prince." The date was St. George's Day. This was the day on which the horse-race was held. These races had just

* I feel bound to note that this last incident is *not* told as having occurred in Chester.

been reorganized by the Sheriff, Mr. Amory, and the Prince of Wales had consented to distinguish by his presence the first occasion of celebrating them under the new rules. One tries to imagine with what ceremonies a similar occasion would in our times be graced. There would be an address by the Mayor and Corporation, the streets would be lined with Territorials, and crowds would assemble and cheer.

How dull!

Imagine, too, the colour scheme—the only bright patch the Aldermen's gowns, here and there a lady with a bright hat; the rest black. I am unfair, indeed, in omitting strings of bunting across the streets and decorated lamp-posts. But now consider how such affairs were carried on in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. No man was shy of gay hues then—greens and scarlets and purples. The whole populace poured through the dark streets in a tumultuous flow of colour. Nor were inarticulate animal noises considered a sufficient means to proclaim their loyalty and their sense of the honour of the occasion. There must be a pageant with marvellously devised incidents and a witty and considerable dialogue, the characters representing various abstract notions of virtue, honour, and so forth. One praises the opening incident of Chester's triumph as calculated immediately to engage the full attention of the audience; it was this: "A man by strange devises clyming to the toppe of a very high spire steeple (standing at the Market Crosse, called St. Peters Steeple) carying an Auncient of our Colours of St. George, dis-

playing the same upon the said steeple and fixing the same to a barre of Iron that the Vane hangeth upon: Likewise, sounding a Drumme, shooting off a Peece, and flourishing a Sword, and standing upon the Crosse of the said barre of Iron, stood upon his hands with his feet into the Ayre, very dangerously and wonderfully to the view of the beholders, with casting Fire-workes very delightfull." This was followed by a differently exciting turn—savage men pursued by a fire-breathing dragon. After these *hors d'œuvres* came something more germane to the occasion—a horseman with the emblems of St. George followed by allegorical figures — Fame, Mercury, and so forth. Each character — Fame, Mercurie, Britaine, Cambria, Rumor, Peace, Plentie, Envie, and Love—delivered addresses. All these are full of the most delightful erudition, and in language very magniloquent. I do not think any subsequent age could produce home-made verse so just in taste, or so melodious, even if here and there it becomes bombastic, and over-reaches itself in ingenuity of conceit. It stands at the exact opposite pole from the halting, barren jingle of the mystery plays. It was the real spring-time of England, when men sang like birds, " in full-throated ease ":

> " Wee'le furrow up those pety hills or heights,
> That lie but in the way of our delights,
> And with the Surplusse of this Surquedrie,
> Fill up the places that too lowly lie
> Within the lift or prospect of that place. . . ."

I do not pretend to know what is the meaning of "the surplus of this surquedrie," nor probably did the writer.

Yet I cannot help admiring a generous carelessness—a sort of brimming over of melody—in the use of these big, rich words. You get it in this too :

> "Many a Monster he by force subdude,
> And many a fiend incarnate he supprest,
> Whose sword did still mow down their multitude,
> So to imbarne them in hells restlesse rest. . . ."

Is this not poetry?—I do not say the highest, but still poetry? Yet, I acknowledge, there is this also :

> "Speake, thou squint-eide Monster,
> "What is the cause which makes the still misconster?

And this, in Chester's last speech, after the races have been run and the prizes distributed :

> "Chester doth invite
> Each noble worthy and each worthy Knight
> To close their stomachs with a small repast."

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VII

CERTAIN BURGESSES

"Burgomasters and great one-eyers, such as can hold in . . ."

§ 1.

Some kinds of stone, as in process of time their texture changes, take on a mellower appearance, a soft bloom, the precipitate, as it were, of forgotten years of sunlight. With Chester sandstone it is otherwise. A certain crudeness of the new stone disappears, but though its outlines soon begin to flow and melt together, the whole does not sweeten. The red tones of it are not softened and warmed ; they grow sombre, tinged with dark smears and stains, an old age noble but tragic. To countervail this gloom is one function of the half-timbered houses. Their spotless plaster and sharp outlines are in contrast with the weathered sandstone, whose mass and weight, on the contrary, supply what the other style lacks in dignity and strength.

What architecture in England chiefly suffers from at present is neglect of the factor of site. When building, you are creating a landscape, you are working parallel with Nature, and must bring your art into harmony with her. Ruskin, indeed, saw this, though, charac-

teristically, he neglected in the sequel all that is implied in the idea. His chapter in "Stones of Venice" on "The Nature of Gothic" sets forth in passionate and lyrical prose the harmony possible between buildings and their natural environment. In domestic architecture examples of this harmony are more frequent than in palaces and cathedrals, in proportion as the builder-owner in the first case is less self-conscious, less apt at every point to distinguish himself from his environment, more apt to let his style of building be conditioned by his materials. Take for illustration the ordinary Cotswold farm-house; nothing could ever be in more perfect harmony with its environment. The walls are built of the local stone, and so is the roof. The whole style, peculiarly distinctive as it is, deduces itself logically from the fact that the Cotswold oolite splits easily up into shards—"slats" they are called. This at once determines the materials of the roof and the pitch of the roof; this in turn the thickness of the walls and the disposition of windows. Thus you have a really beautiful style of building rooted deep in Nature. And the same is most certainly true of the second most beautiful style of English domestic architecture—the so-called half-timbered style. Here the connection between the building and its environment is obvious enough. Just as the pivot-factor of the Cotswold style is the fissile nature of oolite, even so that of the half-timbered style is the toughness and elasticity of wood—its capacity for enduring a big tensional strain. Building with wood you might play

SHREWSBURY HOUSE (THE "BEAR AND BILLET")

all sorts of antics impossible with stone: you might perch your house on the end of a long pole, like a dovecote, or suspend a group of rooms at the end of a horizontal beam, to swing in the breeze like a bird's nest. Your building may rise as light as a cluster of foam-bubbles, if that be your will. In any case you will arrange for wide window spaces—windows that run across the whole width of your building, with the upright dividing timbers black as ebony; latticed windows, where the light will break up into innumerable iridescent flakes. For the broad band of windows in Shrewsbury House I would choose another metaphor. This is a border city, and Shrewsbury House the dwelling-place of the sergeant of the Bridge Gate, and that wide range of lights might assume the semblance of a strip of mail, a hauberk of shimmering scale-armour.

Nor can you with stone structures build the upper stories to project far beyond the lower. The æsthetic effect of such projections is to secure big shadows, and to the same end the eaves are brought forward and enriched with large boards richly sculptured. With the main structural members necessarily open to view and unmistakably performing their functions, a larger amount of rich decoration in detail is permissible than in buildings whose structure is not so easily to be grasped. So when you build a palace for Bishop Lloyd, you fill in the framework with carved panels, full of delightful humour and naïve sincerity—Cain murdering Abel, the Blessed Virgin with the sword piercing her heart, Adam and Eve in the Garden,

Abraham sacrificing Isaac, Hell Mouth swallowing a sinner—the mystery plays, though long extinct, still dimly lighting your fancy.

That such a bright, smiling, and cosy thing should be the offspring of those dreary forests that once smothered all the English Midlands! Such is the parentage of the half-timbered house, but its offspring is yet more remarkable than its parentage. It is own ancestor of the Hellenic temple. Bishop Lloyd's palace is no very distant cousin to the Parthenon. Archæologists have traced out the greater part of this genealogy. And still this parent-style is fecund—and this is the biggest marvel—likely to produce in our own Iron Age a truly characteristic and new architecture. Our big buildings are nearly all of steel to-day; yet still in too many cases they ape the old architecture of stone. The steel frame is veneered over with a covering of thin stone, with sham pilasters and columns that carry no weight at all. But when our builders cease to be ashamed of their material of steel, and consent to show the structural parts, then is the time when they will have to learn again in the school of the half-timber artists, for the half-timber principles closely resemble the principles of modern steel-frame buildings—naturally so, since timber and steel resemble each other in the quality of their strength: the strength of stone lies in its incompressibility, that of steel and timber in their power of bearing tensional strains. The frame building of the future will show its structural members, cased, if need be, in concrete, just as the half-timber

building proudly displays its oaken posts. Mr. T. G. Jackson has suggested that the frames will be filled in with glazed bricks, thus providing increased opportunities for the use of colour. There might also be panels of plaster or terra-cotta moulded or carved—what possibilities open up for a revived craftsmanship!

§ 2.

Half-timbered houses are supposed to be distinctively Elizabethan, and the sight of one calls up every kind of romantic association. You expect, on entering, let us say, the Falcon Inn, to find oak-panelled rooms, dressers set out with pewter, linen-presses full of lavender-scented linen, oak tables, and chairs and settles, a wide chimney with an ingle-nook, and sweet Anne Page brewing spiced ale or spinning at the window-side. Such, indeed, you might have found in Elizabeth's time. Certainly there had been an improvement for the better since the fourteenth century in all the external circumstances of life. Not that perfection had been attained, not but what there remained many things offensive to the sense. Yet the town records show that the citizens were increasing their efforts towards attaining health and cleanliness. The increased value set upon human life—one of the consequences of the Renaissance—was beginning to bear fruit everywhere. The body and the things of the body were no longer condemned by the educated thinkers of

the day as corruptible dross. From Hellas came the dream of a fair mind in a sweet body.

In provincial towns like Chester, of course, men did not analyse their motives, but obeyed simply the general movement of the time. For the city fathers humanism took the form of continual Assembly Orders concerning the repair of pavements, levelling and cleaning of streets, removal of drainage scandals. There are continual complaints that one man has dug a deep hole in Pepper Street to get earth for his garden, while another heaps his timber in Common Hall Lane, a third slaughters cattle and swine in his "backside," a fourth turns loose his swine into a neighbour's garden; all these set down in the most amazing Latin—save the mark!—*e.g.*, "Robinson, vidua, inhabitans in le Northgate Street, quia patitur certos les butchers occidere victualia sua in suo le backside, . . . et specialiter in le somer tyme. . . ." And the frequency of these complaints means that greater efforts were being made than before to detect, report, and punish these misdeeds. We must infer an improvement in the policing of the town.

In this time some defence was first organized—it seems incredible that nothing to speak of had as yet been attempted—against the two most formidable enemies of the city, fire and plague. Sir John Savage in his mayoralty drew up a scheme whereby the citizens, each in his degree, should contribute to the upkeep of buckets and ladders. It was the same Mayor who, five years later, introduced regulations for

dealing with cases of plague. Sufferers from it were forbidden to go abroad; by way of prevention, it was enacted that no swine should be kept within the city, and that no dirt or rubbish should be cast within the walls; dogs were to be kept within the houses; and, finally, each case was to be notified by means of a paper containing the words, "Lord have mercy upon us," being pinned to the door of the house affected.

Sir John Savage was one of a number of reforming Mayors who held office in the sixteenth century. Others of like temper were Henry Gee and Henry Hardware. Henry Gee is chiefly admirable for the courage with which he tackled the question of ladies' headgear, an attempt which we may certainly conclude to have failed. His ground of action was the shocking promiscuity of head-dresses, making it impossible to tell at a glance whether any given lady were widow, wife, or maid. Gee and Hardware may be not unfairly described as of a Puritanical temper, if this be taken to mean that they were apt, on the whole, to take rather too serious a view of life, and to wall in their sympathies on certain sides. Many things in the town life were bad, but the damage done by lack of sympathy and insight is only now beginning to be realized.

There were a brutality and a hardness in the men of that era, no doubt a survival from the Middle Ages, which the humanistic forces had not yet been able to resolve—in fact, it continued well on into the eighteenth century. It manifested itself chiefly in cruel sports, such as bull-baiting and bear-baiting and cock-fighting;

it appeared in language as a kind of grossness, defiling even the lips of Sovereigns, and in commerce in the form of hardness and greed. Gee and Hardware, less offending on the side of grossness, but more on that of hardness, construed reform as the complete suppression of all sports and shows and a rigorous sumptuary legislation. They tried to get rid of one excess by another. Merriness became suspect; mummers were forbidden; the mystery plays ceased, and the Midsummer Show was shorn of a great part of its glories.

Not that any clear division existed between the Puritans and the losels. As somebody has said of politics, it was not a matter of black and white, but of more or less grey. Among the Aldermen themselves we get the gradations illustrated. At one end of the scale you have such men as Gee and Hardware, or Mutton—that black sheep who pulled down all the crosses in Chester except the High Cross. Next to them come men of a serious turn of mind, but fairly broad in their sympathies, such as Sir John Savage. Then comes a class represented by Richard Dutton, decent in observance of the conventionalities, but inclined towards the festive—men who kept open house on Christmas Day on the one hand, while in the observance of small proprieties they were most punctilious. Lastly, the worthy but illiterate Brerewood, stout champion of all sports and ancient customs. Being unable to read, he had to learn by heart the speech which, as Mayor, he was required to make to the Watch on Christmas Eve. Mr. William Knight,

Clerk of the Pentice, had composed the speech. It was this Brerewood who, in 1600, restored all the games and shows which Hardware had in the previous year prohibited.

There was one form of expenditure which all these different types of citizen tolerated and even praised—that, namely, incurred in the entertaining of distinguished strangers. Even "Puritan" Mayors did not, on such occasion, discountenance the performance of plays at the High Cross or on the River Dee. There would, of course, be banquets at the Pentice, and gifts of the most diverse and astonishing kinds—a hogshead of wine, a silver-gilt cup filled with angels, pots of conserves ("marmelaths suckets"), comfits, sugar-loaves, cheeses, biscuits.

A fine sense of municipal independence had sprung up in Chester, as in all other towns, since the middle of the fifteenth century. The "reforming Mayors," men of great strength of character, were simply typical of their time. This sense of independence showed itself most clearly in cases when a powerful nobleman sought preferment for some favourite. There is more than one case of such a request being, with due courtesy, refused. The Earl of Leicester, for example, writes to ask that Mr. John Edwards of London may be admitted to the franchise and liberties of the city, to which the Corporation replies that, willing as they are "to accomplish his Honour such a request, yet as Edwards is a man of great wealth, capable, if he wishes, of ruining all the trades in the city, they cannot

consider him fit to receive the privilege, and so they most humbly beseech his Honour's patience in their behalf." Nor do they even shrink, on one occasion, from refusing the request of royalty—of James I. himself.

At the same time, though, a new temper seemed to be possessing the city ; it had passed the zenith of its career. It could never again be reckoned among the first five towns in England. The reason we have mentioned more than once: it had lost its harbour. All the shipping now put in at the New Quay, eight miles from the town. The history of the building of this New Quay is melancholy reading, for it sheds full light upon the poverty of the town, which only by desperate struggles and after a score of years could scrape together the means to execute the project. Again, in Elizabeth's day Chester was no longer indeed a border fortress. As a gateway to Ireland the city still had its importance, and was destined to play a part in the civil wars of the seventeenth century. The Welsh, however, were at peace, and the spread of education was killing out the old hostility between them and the English. The citizens ceased to trouble about keeping their walls in good repair. From time to time spasmodic efforts were made to rebuild the unsound parts, but the work spent upon them was frequently slack and inefficient.

Yet the spirit of romance was still alive in the city, informing the actions of its inhabitants. So much is abundantly proved by the story of the Blue Posts Inn.

To the Blue Posts Inn, Lower Bridge Street, there came one day in the year 1558 Dr. Henry Cole, no less, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. Distinguished as he was, I doubt whether he came with too loud a flourish of trumpets to herald him. Chester was a hot-bed of Protestantism, as was shown by the conduct of the crowd when George Marsh, a hot-gospeller from Lancashire, was burnt at the stake (see p. 100). Moreover, at this particular time Dr. Henry Cole was about a business of some moment and delicacy. Bloody Mary had sent him down with a warrant to persecute the Protestants of Ireland. Dean Cole was a person somewhat after the type of Bishop Bird. He had played chameleon in 1534 and 1547, and preached most poisonous stuff against Cranmer. He was a coward and a bully, as the sequel shows. While he was at the Blue Posts he received a call from the Mayor of Chester. During the interview, he produced the case containing his warrant, and cried exultingly: "Here is what will lash the heretics of Ireland!" Now, the landlady, Mrs. Mottershed, had a brother in Dublin, and being in the room or at the keyhole while the Mayor was paying his call, she must have conceived a distinct aversion for the Dean. In due time the Dean moved down to New Quay, and took ship for Dublin—one hopes he had a stormy passage. On his arrival he impatiently hastened to the castle and thrust his precious despatch-box into the hands of the Lord Deputy, perhaps repeating his little sentence about lashing heretics—the effect of which would be spoilt

by the Lord Deputy opening the box and finding there nothing but a pack of cards with the knave of clubs uppermost.

The ingenious Mrs. Mottershed had taken out the warrant and substituted the cards while Dean Cole was conducting the Mayor to the door of the inn. Her act shows her not only brave, but distinctly humorous. There is no spot to mar this little romance, for Queen Mary died almost immediately upon Dean Cole's return to England, so that the landlady, instead of being punished, received a pension from Elizabeth.

§ 3.

I said that Chester in this period was no longer a border fortress. Still, at times, she resounded with the hum of armies, troops for the wars in Ireland. They were lodged, sometimes as many as fifteen hundred at a time, within and around the city, and our merchants drove a spanking trade. For the provisioning of one single contingent you read of 32 cwt. of biscuit, 6 tuns of beer, 16 cwt. of cheese, 8 cwt. of butter, casks and sacks manufactured for the same in the city. Add porterage and storage to these, together with a bill for powder and matches, and payments to the cutlers and smiths for polishing up armour and weapons. No wonder the Mayor sent in the most eloquent petitions when there was talk of making Liverpool rather than Chester the point for shipping the troops! And yet the Mayor

was an anxious man, too, in these times. The troops were unruly, and there were constant brawlings which recalled the bad old days of the fifteenth century. The gibbet was set up at the High Cross by way of a warning. Under it were sometimes to be seen poor wretches nailed by the ears to wooden uprights; these were deserters or other notorious offenders. The Mayor would not stir abroad unless a bodyguard were provided for him consisting of four freemen armed with halberts.

Again, though the Castle was no longer the seat of Earls Palatine, though in long years of peace its influence seemed to have vanished, it still remained as the symbol of a powerful external authority, as will soon be made clear in the following story. I conceive the veritable Iago in this matter to have been William Glaseor. The whole business only reveals its significance upon prolonged and attentive consideration. At first sight you would take it for a number of personal squabbles between various citizens, but when you reflect upon the meaning of citizenship in those days—how dearly bought and highly prized were its privileges, how militant was the city corporate throughout the Middle Ages, and even in the sixteenth century—you begin to suspect the presence of larger forces than those of single individuals. In what sense the municipality was militant has already been suggested. All its struggles had been against its feudal overlords, the Earls. The combatants, in other words, were on the one hand the Pentice, on the other the Castle. And I

take the affair now to be narrated as nothing but a recrudescence in Elizabeth's day of that old struggle. Representing the Castle you have a royal official, the Deputy-Chamberlain of Chester, Mr. William Glaseor; representing the Pentice, various Mayors and Aldermen —Mr. Harry Hardware, Mr. Richard Dutton, Mr. Thomas Greene, and so forth. And I repeat, I conceive the Iago of this story to have been William Glaseor. Was it not he who, jealous for the royal prerogative and contemptuous of the city authority, had stirred up the trouble between Thomas Greene and Fulk Aldersay? The immediate cause for which these two went to law matters not; the important point was that whereas a patriotic citizen would have taken the case into the Mayor's court, Fulk Aldersay chose to bring it in the Exchequer Court in the Castle, where William Glaseor presided as Deputy-Chamberlain. Unhesitatingly the Mayor swooped down upon the unhappy Fulk and disfranchised him.

Thus was the name of Aldersay made to stink in the nostrils of the Town Council. Yet Fulk was only a dupe. He was a stupid but worthy citizen. His wife Cicely was a shrew, and constantly threatened first to poison him and then to burn his house over his head, till he had her into court and bound over in £10 sureties to keep the peace against him. Not that he lacked courage, by any means, for when Essex's soldiers for the Irish wars were giving trouble in the town, he had two of them seized, and would have strung them up at the Cross without delay, had not

their officers made special intercession for them. He had enemies among the Aldermen, especially among the men of stricter lives. Such were shocked at the laxity of his attendance at Divine service, and fined him and his cousin William for this. The Aldersays would retaliate by shooting their rubbish into St. Oswald's Churchyard, only to be subjected to a second fine. Fulk and his cousin William were very much of the same make, men of average ideals—that is to say, no ideals at all—who carried on a fairly prosperous business, and for enjoyment in leisure hours patronized the bull-ring, the bear-pit, and the ale-house, in which latter place they drank to the confusion of Cicely's tongue. They paid their dues, and attended the Council meetings regularly, and what with this and appearing upon the Queen's summons at a military muster with "a paire whyt harnes with theyr furneture," they looked upon themselves as dutiful and indifferent honest citizens.

So far we have Fulk disfranchised, William Glaseor in the background smiling over the agitation of the Aldermen at this threat against their powers and privileges, and the name of Aldersay rather the worse for wear. Fulk, indeed, may be said to have dragged down cousin William in his fall, for Thomas Greene, still hungry for revenge, confederated with himself the other enemies of the Aldersays—to wit, Harry Hardware, Richard Dutton, and John Cowper, ex-Mayor—and called William Aldersay to account for not wearing a tippet to church on Sunday, as every self-respecting

Alderman should, and, indeed, is by law bound to do. Any stick would do to beat William with. He was disfranchised, too, and forbidden to exercise his trade in the city. A petition to the Chamberlain—whose deputy, William Glaseor, lay at the root of these misfortunes—brought no relief. Will Aldersay was threatened with ruin. Only one course was left to him. In the south-west corner of the city, just by the Castle, was an area of ground where the Mayor had no authority. Naturally it was the resort of every imaginable kind of rogue, herded together in filthy hovels, and conversing in that strange thieves' patter called cant or peddler's French. It was a terrible blow for William, but here he made shift to exist by selling grocery and small wares to such as wished to buy at lower prices than the companies would permit within the area of the city's authority. Let it be noted that Gloverstone, this disreputable district, was within the jurisdiction of the Castle; and in the Castle who was master but William Glaseor?

The fact is, William Glaseor had been defeated in the first stage of his contest with the Mayor. It was not that his dupes and tools, the house of Aldersay, had suffered—this did not affect him to any extent; but Richard Dutton, that hale and hearty citizen, had betaken him to Court, and after much unblushing bribery (the recognized method in such matters at that period), had procured a new charter, settling the dispute in favour of the Mayor and Council. The bribes most probably took the simplest and most

obvious forms. First, there was money, and no Tudor despised it; secondly, there were presents of Cheshire cheeses and salmon and fine gloves and stockings, to say nothing of malmsey and capons and unlimited free dinners.

But the account was not cleared yet, and Glaseor—a petulant, scorpion-like fellow—had it yet in his power to annoy; and still the Aldersays might be useful. A matter which had been engaging the attention of the Mayor and Aldermen was the closing of the Wolf Gate or New Gate. All this was sheer fussiness, and hitherto no sufficient reason had been shown why the gate should be shut. William Glaseor directed his attention to this fact, and his acute wits soon discovered a manner of furnishing such sufficient reasons. The gate once shut, he saw a fruitful source of trouble, petitions, corruption, expenses, and general strife and bitterness.

We must turn to the Sweet Ann Page of our epoch. She lived in Pepper Street, and her name was Ellen Aldersay, daughter of Ralph. She was the only love and lodestar of Ralph Jaman, draper. In this period, when England was really musical, I should like to think of Ralph Jaman serenading his mistress with voice and lute, singing, it may be, one of those graceful and rather plaintive melodies in which Master Francis Pilkington,* conduct in the cathedral choir, did so much excel, and such a charm in the lyric!

* Here, in stern fact, is an anachronism. Francis Pilkington did not come to Chester till 1602, whereas the Ellen Aldersay incident is of the year 1573.

"Diaphenia, like the Daffdowndillie,
White as the sun, faire as the lilie;
Heigho, how I do love thee!
I do love thee as my lambs
Are beloved of their dams.
How blest were I if thou wouldst prove me!

"Diaphenia, like the spreading roses,
That in thy sweetes, all sweetes incloses:
Faire Sweete, how I do love thee!
I do love thee as each flower
Loves the sun's life-giving power.

"Diaphenia, like to all things blessed,
When all thy praises are expressed;
Dear Jay, how I do love thee!
As the birds do love the Spring,
Or the bees their careful king,
Then in requite, Sweete Virgin, love me."

Or that other, which likewise Mr. Frederick Keel has restored to us in his "Elizabethan Love-Songs":

"Underneath a Cypress Tree the Queen of Love sat sighing."

For in no other tuneful ways were the fashions of wooing set in these times. No fragrance of the idyll has been imprisoned between the musty pages of the Town Records. It may be she first saw and admired him at the shooting-butts on the Roodeye, where, like old Double, Justice Shallow's friend, "'a would have clapped i' the clout at twelve score, and carried you a forehand shaft a fourteen and fourteen and a half that it would have done a man's heart good to see." Or his prowess may have been in the jousting-ring under

THE PEPPER GATE

the Phœnix Tower, or at the football on the Roodeye, in which several hundreds took part—none of your modern "Rugby game," but more like American football; for you might hit, scratch, and bite. True, the game was forbidden by law, but it continued in the law's despite. Let us hope he did not play football in St. Werburgh's Churchyard during Divine service, as William Wirhall, *capellanus*, and his friends used to do. But it is of little advantage to suggest details. Each man must supply his own colour for the story, borrowing it from Shakespeare, or Spenser, or Dekker, or Gosson, or whencesoever he pleases. Tradition, as usual, and not the Town Records, preserves the one vivifying touch: Ellen Aldersay was playing at ball with her girl friends in Pepper Street, when Ralph Jaman, on the appointed day, came to steal her from her father's house. A companion—who knows?—in the secret, with calculated clumsiness, sent the silken ball too far, so that it rolled right through the Pepper Gate close by. Ellen slipped through to fetch it and did not return.

The fat was in the fire, and furious was the sizzling. Alderman Ralph Aldersay went straight to the Mayor in his distress. The Mayor called his Council together, and resolutions and counter-resolutions were passed, and all the majestic powers of the Corporation set in motion to detect and punish the offender. Parsons preached against this horrible unfilial conduct, and it was noticed that all the maidens of the town had had a sudden attack of primness, and lifted hands and eyes in

protest against such badness and boldness. Of course, the real culprit never appeared. It was Hugh Rogerson and Richard Wright who received the obloquy which should have fallen on Glaseor. He smiled and waited what should follow. Of course, the order came that the Pepper Gate should be blocked up ; the true reason was still kept in abeyance out of a sense of shame, all that was alleged being " divers inconveniences."

Here was the exact turn of circumstances which William Glaseor had been awaiting. He at once set in motion the cumbrous machinery of petitions and counter-petitions to have the Pepper Gate reopened. He pleaded that the closing of it caused him considerable inconvenience. We need not labour to imagine the details. The case went up to the Lords of the Privy Council, and they arranged a compromise—the gate to be closed by night, open by day. This issue mattered not two straws to Mr. William Glaseor : he had attained his object—to make a nuisance of himself to the Town Council.

It must not be supposed that the Castle and the Pentice were constantly engaged in such hostilities. The moral of the *affaire* Glaseor is that civic pride was sensitive to excess. This sensitiveness must have been a survival from days when the town really had something to fear from the Earls, when it was forced to be on the alert against the infringement of any one of its privileges, or the establishment of any unfavourable precedent.

The history of Chester, like the history of every

other city in England, can be divided into two periods. It is only with the first of these that this book has been concerned—the period, namely, in which the city vindicates its separate existence, its independence of all external authority, its necessity in the economic scheme. In this struggle for independence the citizens may occasionally have lost sight of that larger national unity in which they also had a share. The second period is a return to this idea of national unity, natural enough so soon as the city's existence is recognized. The city does not by any means lose its individuality, but becomes less constantly and vividly aware of it. It follows that the history of the second period is less picturesque, less romantic. Such interest as it possesses centres more about individual citizens, for now that external pressure is removed, now that the city is no longer a camp and discipline relaxes, now that trade snaps one by one the shackles of the gild system, the individual is free to re-emerge. All which is alien ground to the temper of this book ; let it, therefore, be closed.

February sleet is driving in gusts against the resonant pane, the wind hums and hisses along the roofs ; but in the Rows, the arteries of the city, life is still pulsing cheerily with undiminished vigour.

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